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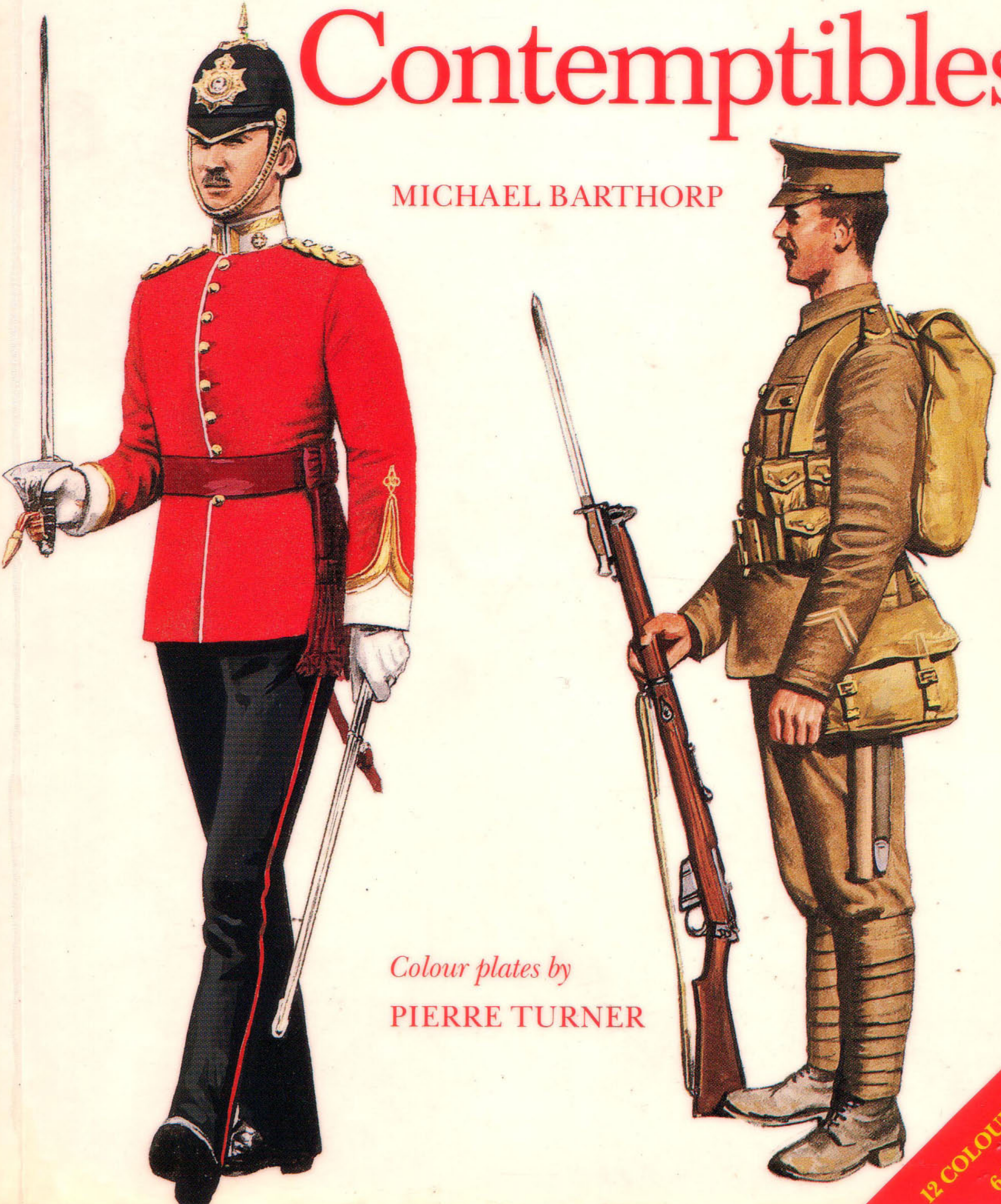
The Old Contemptibles

MICHAEL BARTHORP



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PIERRE TURNER

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EDITOR: MARTIN WINDROW

The Old Contemptibles

THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, ITS CREATION AND EXPLOITS, 1902–14

Text by MICHAEL BARTHORP

Colour plates by PIERRE TURNER

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The Old Contemptibles

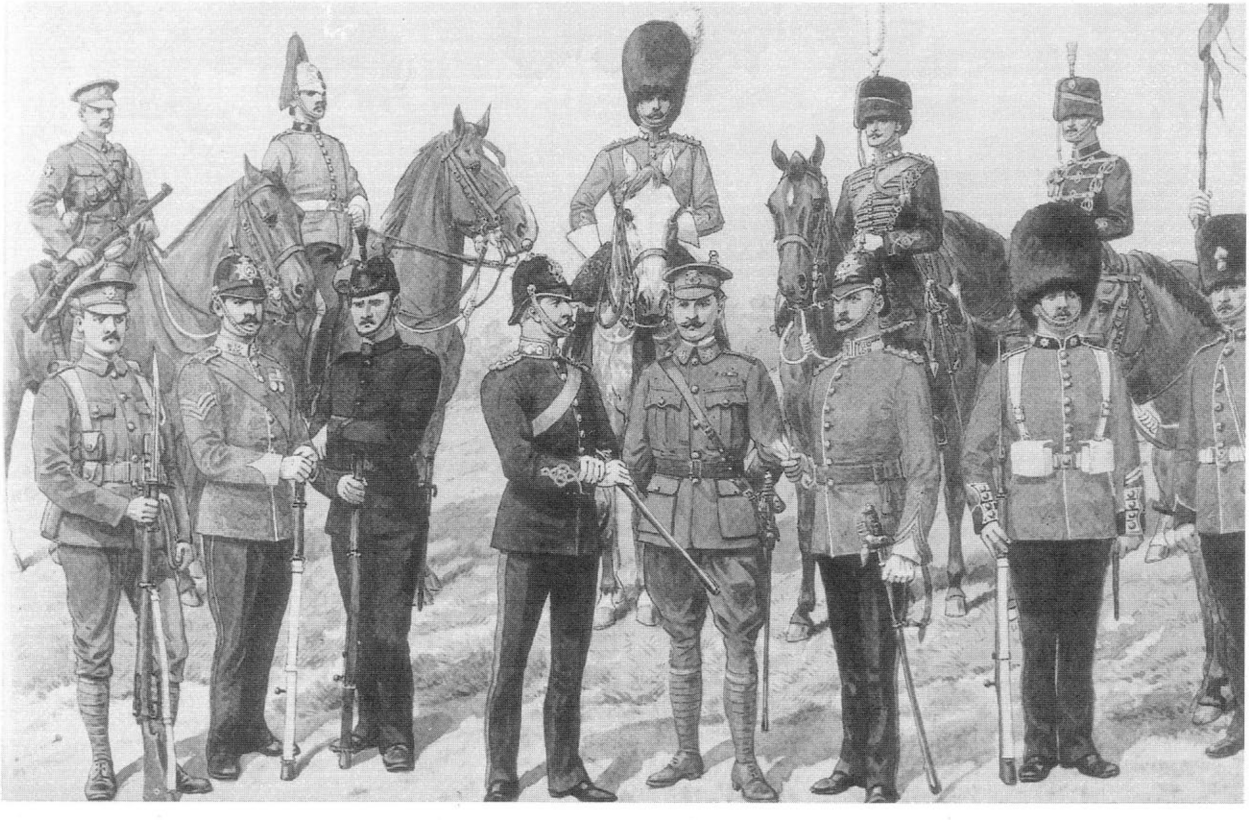
Preface

On 19 August 1914 Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered Gen. von Kluck, commanding the German First Army, to 'exterminate the treacherous English and walk over General French's contemptible little Army'. When translated into English the Kaiser's second adjective should more properly have been rendered as an adverb or as 'insignificant'; but, as published, it appealed to the sardonic sense of humour of French's soldiers, who cared little about the Kaiser, and found his general's surname comic for its rhyming possibilities. They adopted the aspersion like a treasured regimental title and kept it forever—hence 'The Old Contemptibles'.

A more considered evaluation of the British Expeditionary Force was that of the universally respected military writer and critic, Sir Basil Liddell-Hart, who, assessing the European armies in 1914, called it 'the most highly trained striking force of any country—a rapier among scythes'. The German Chief-of-Staff, von Moltke, considered it 'that perfect thing apart', while the Official History of the Great War pronounced it to have been 'the best trained, best organized and best equipped British Army that ever went forth to war'—a verdict which even now, three-quarters of a century later and another World War intervening, arguably still holds good.

Unlike the conscript armies of Europe, the BEF of 1914 was composed entirely of professional soldiers,

Types of the Regular Army in service and full dress: rear, Cavalry and RHA; front, Infantry and RFA. (R. Simkin; National Army Museum)



Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief, British Expeditionary Force, 1914, in field-marshal's full dress. (Author's collection)

pre-war Regulars, all volunteers. Some had fought the Boers, others had skirmished on the Indian frontiers and in other outposts of Empire. They had little animosity towards the Germans and, if so ordered, would as readily have fought the French or the Russians as their forebears had done. Though they had scant regard for any foreigners—their transactions across the Channel were often conducted in Urdu or Arabic—they were not ardent nationalists, nor were they particularly conscious of being part of the British Army. Rather they were Coldstream Guardsmen or Horse Gunners, Royal Dragoons or Gordon Highlanders; their regiment was going to war, so they went with it.

The Regular engagement for soldiers was for 12 years, part with the Colours, part on the Reserve, with an option of extending Colour service to complete 21 years. Thus in the BEF's ranks were men who had enlisted from 1903 onwards, plus some veterans of the Boer War and other late 19th century campaigns. Many, of course, were recalled Reservists whose Colour service, most of it overseas, may have ended around 1910. In contrast were young soldiers with only two years' service or less. The Welch Fusilier Frank Richards[1], was mobilised at the age of 30, having gone on the Reserve in 1909 after serving in India and Burma and voluntarily extending his Reserve liability in 1912; he left his coal-mining job without complaint, and reported 'in a jovial state'. Trumpeter Naylor, Royal Field Artillery, had two years' service but had to plead with his officer to accompany his battery as he was not yet 17 and still on boy service.

The components of the original BEF were all home-based and in peacetime usually under strength owing to the need to keep units overseas up to establishment, so the numbers of Reservists required to complete units to their war establishment were high and, after mobilisation, represented 60 per cent of the BEF's strength. Though this raised some family and physical fitness problems, in other respects most Reservists soon settled into their old regiments with their younger comrades, this process being much helped by the many unchanging aspects of Army life.

The officers were mostly the products of Sandhurst or Woolwich. The Commander-in-Chief, FM Sir John French, and his two Corps Commanders, Lt.Gens. Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, were commissioned respectively in 1874, 1885 and 1876[2]. 2/Lt. Orme, 2/Royal Welch Fusiliers, was commissioned one month before he was killed on 6 November 1914. Most officers of field rank had seen service in the Boer War and earlier campaigns in India or Africa. French's first active service had been leading a squadron of 19th Hussars in the Gordon Relief Expedition. Smith-Dorrien was one of the few survivors of Isandlwana. Haig had led an Egyptian cavalry squadron at Omdurman. Maj.Gen. Snow, commanding 4th Division, had been in the Zulu and both Sudan Wars. Among the brigadier-generals were Gleichen, who had been a subaltern in the Guards Camel Regiment on the Nile in 1885; Haldane, who had escaped from a Boer prison camp with Winston Churchill; and three Boer War VCs, Congreve, Phipps-Hornby and John Gough. Among the hundreds of subalterns were two who, later in life, would achieve high rank and distinction: Lt. Bernard Montgomery of 1/Royal Warwicks, and 2/Lt. Brian Horrocks of 1/Middlesex, who was commissioned the day war broke out.

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[1] Author of *Old Soldier Sahib* (1936) and *Old Soldiers Never Die* (1933).

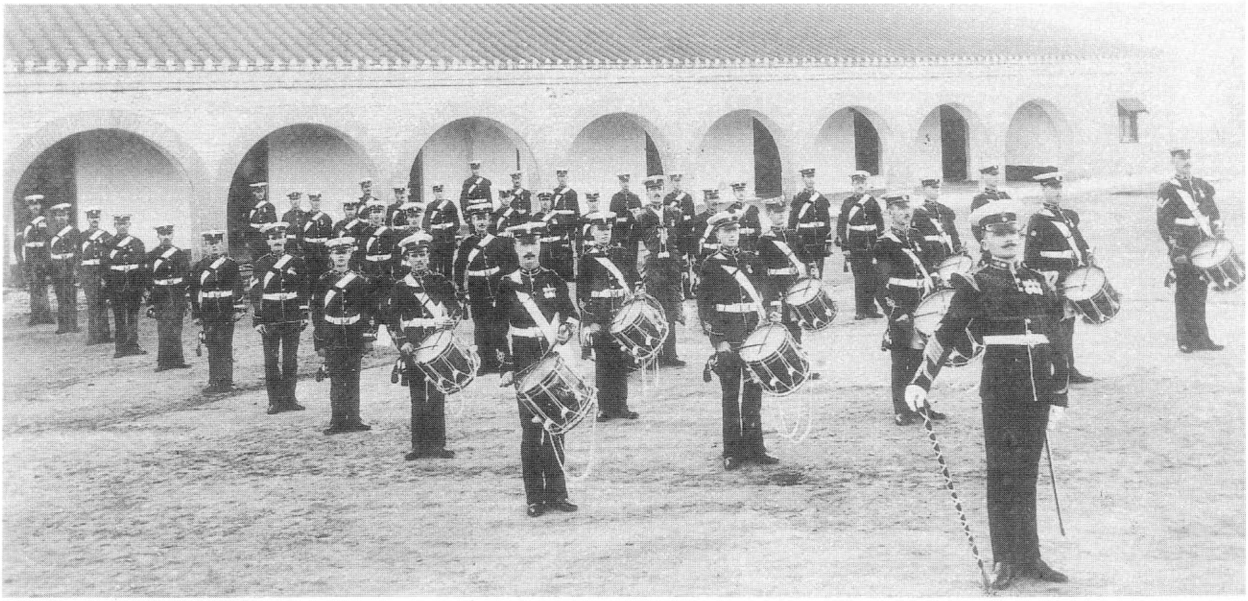
[2] French had previously served four years in the Navy. Haig went to Oxford before Sandhurst.

The BEF did not spring into sudden existence in August 1914 but resulted from reforms begun after the Boer War. So, too, were its men the products of those same 12 years. This study therefore starts from 1902, but it should be remembered that, although many improvements in operational efficiency were made in those 12 years, the British Army's regiments were in more intangible respects still the same as had emerged from the 19th into the 20th century and drew much of their inspiration from their forebears as in the past[3]. Although their predominantly scarlet full dress was put into store, they were still Britain's 'red little Army'.

The Army and Reform 1902–14

At the turn of the century Britain's land forces were all voluntarily enlisted, and consisted of: the Regular Army and its Reserve, called out 'in case of national danger or pressing necessity'; the Militia, with 28 days' annual obligation for training, embodied as for the Regular Reserve; the Yeomanry Cavalry, committed to 20 days' annual training; and the Volunteers, committed to at least 30 hours' drill per year plus target practice. None, except Regulars and mobilised Reservists, were bound to serve outside the United Kingdom unless they volunteered to do so. The Yeomanry and Volunteers could be called out permanently in case of invasion and the Yeomanry in aid of the Civil Power; neither existed in Ireland, which had only Militia.

The regiments and corps which made up these forces were as follows: Household Cavalry (three regiments) and Cavalry of the Line (28 regiments), Regular Army (including Reservists) only; 38 regiments of Yeomanry Cavalry; Royal Artillery (Horse, Field and Garrison) and Royal Engineers, both represented in the Regulars, Militia and Volunteers; Foot Guards (four regiments finding nine battalions), Regulars only; Infantry of the Line (68 territorially-based regiments) and the Rifle Brigade, represented in the Regulars, Militia and Volunteers with, respectively, 148, 126 and 215 battalions. These constituted the Arms. The Services were: Army Service Corps (Regulars and Volunteers); Royal Army Medical Corps (Regulars, Militia and Volunteers); Army Ordnance Corps, Military Police, Army Pay Department, Veterinary Department (all Regulars).



Foreign service: drums and fifes, 1/Royal Munster Fusiliers beating Retreat, Nowshera, India, 1912, shortly before leaving for Burma. Indian cold weather review order with covered forage caps. (NAM)

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[3] See *The British Army on Campaign, 1816–1902*, Nos. 193, 196, 198, 201 in the Men-at-Arms series.

Shooting team, 2/Hampshires at Pretoria, 1909, in khaki drill service dress and 1903 equipment. A Regular Army garrison remained in South Africa until 1914. (NAM)

The tasks of these forces as a whole were: defence of the United Kingdom; manning the Imperial garrisons; mobilisation of a force to protect national interests outside UK (e.g. the Army Corps sent to South Africa in 1899).

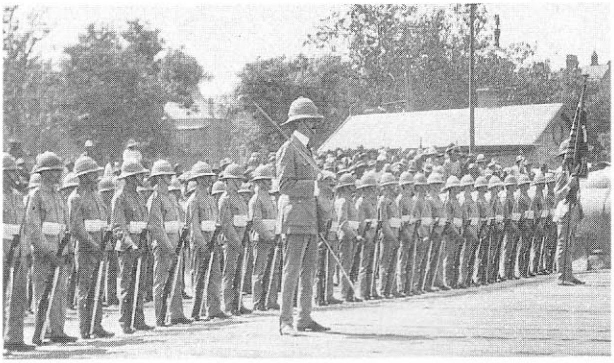
The Boer War demonstrated that the Army was inadequate and poorly organised for a large war, despite many of the part-time forces having volunteered for overseas. Public criticism of the war's conduct, followed by the official report, compelled Balfour's Conservative government to institute major reforms in almost every military field from top to bottom.

The work was begun even before the war ended by the War Secretary, St John Brodrick, assisted by the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts, and continued from 1903 by Brodrick's successor, Arnold-Forster. Though the major proposals of both foundered, mainly on financial and political grounds, some progress was made in the higher administration in the War Office and equipment and training fields. In 1902 Balfour had instituted the Committee of Imperial Defence, which discussed defence policy applicable to both Services; from 1904 this was strengthened by a permanent Secretariat. In the same year the post of Commander-in-Chief was abolished and replaced by the Army Council, an advisory board for the War Secretary of four senior officers, each the head of a War Office department, and two civilians, known as the financial and civil members. The formation of a General Staff, which had never existed before, was begun, and a new post, Inspector-General of the Forces, was approved to undertake the former Commander-in-Chief's inspection duties. Apart from equipment and training innovations, which will be mentioned later, this was as far as Balfour's government got. Not only had Arnold-Forster's proposals engendered great controversy with the Army Council, but in 1905 the Conservatives lost office to the Liberals.

On the face of it, given the pacific and anti-Imperialist elements among Liberals, they were unlikely to place a high priority on Army reform. The new War Secretary, R. B. Haldane, was a lawyer with no previous military expertise. He had, however, a keen intellect, broad vision, a willingness to listen to expert advice, and a shrewd awareness of possible threats to peace.

Until this date British defence policy in Europe had been preoccupied with home defence against invasion; abroad it was to counter the threat to the Empire from French ambitions in Africa, and Russia's towards India. The latter was indirectly responsible for one of the Army's few post-Boer War campaigns: the 1904 expedition from India to forestall Russian encroachments in Tibet. The expedition the previous year, also mounted from India, to quell the 'Mad Mullah's' revolt in the Somaliland Protectorate, was purely local counter-insurgency; but Somaliland was held to be strategically important through its proximity to the coaling and cable station at Aden (where troops were also deployed in 1903 to counter tribal unrest during a boundary dispute with the Ottoman Empire), and its vulnerable position between French and Italian Somaliland. Countering tribal unrest on India's North-West Frontier was a

Guard of Honour, 2/South Wales Borderers at Tientsin, 1914. Two battalions were in China at this date. (NAM)



perennial task for the Army in India, behind which the possibility of Russian exploitation always existed, but the 1908 operations thereon had no Russian dimension as by then the perceived threat had changed. These campaigns had little relevance to Army reform, except as evidence of the Army's unending Imperial responsibilities; they employed few battalions[4] but added some more men to the South Africa veterans who were to earn German admiration during the Retreat from Mons for their ability 'to slip off at the last moment [being] up to all the tricks of the trade from their experience of small wars'[5].

After Russia's defeat by Britain's ally Japan in 1905 an Anglo-Russian Convention was signed which guaranteed the Indian frontiers. Since 1897 Russia had been allied to France, with whom Britain settled its colonial differences by the *Entente Cordiale* in 1904. The three powers were therefore now allies, their motive of course being the rising power and ambitions of Imperial Germany, perceived by all three as the greatest threat to peace in Europe. Thus, when the Liberals assumed office, the most likely contingency for the Army had moved much closer to home, though the Imperial frontiers and bases in India, Africa, the Mediterranean and the Far East would still have to be guarded and garrisoned—a task which could only be effectively done with Regular soldiers.

Haldane's Achievement

The Royal Navy had guaranteed the security of Britain against invasion (though this assurance was not wholly accepted in all quarters). Haldane therefore saw his task as fashioning an Army, within the budget allowed him and retaining the voluntary system (conscription being politically unacceptable), capable of maintaining the Imperial garrisons in peacetime and, in the event of war, providing an expeditionary force for employment overseas, and expanding and maintaining it thereafter. The most likely destination for such a force was the Continent—a rôle hardly considered since the Napoleonic Wars—though for political and diplomatic reasons this could not be publicly stated[6]. However unofficial military discussions between Britain and France had begun in 1905, particularly with a view to considering British action in the event of a German invasion of France infringing the neutrality of Belgium, whose frontiers had been guaranteed since 1839 by powers including Britain and Germany (then Prussia). From 1911, with Cabinet approval, the British and French General Staffs worked out a detailed plan for a British force's movement to France and its concentration on the left of the French armies around Maubeuge-Le Cateau, some ten miles short of the Belgian frontier. There was, however, no binding obligation on the British Government to send this force, or any part of it, to France or anywhere else. Nevertheless this was the contingency for which Haldane and his military advisers planned.

The first requirement was to modernise the Army's 'brains', the War Office and its subordinate headquarters, to ensure all worked on a universal

2/Scots Guards, a Household battalion not committed to the original BEF, leaving HM Tower of London to join 7th Division, 15 September 1914, prior to embarkation for Belgium. (Imperial War Museum)

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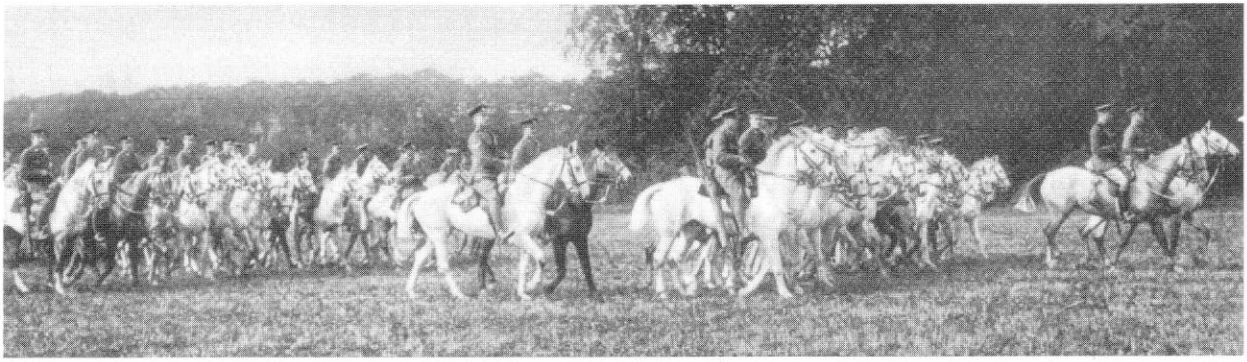
[4] *Tibet*: RA; 1/Royal Fusiliers. *Somaliland*: RE; 1/Hampshire, 4/KRRC, detachments of Royal Warwicks, King's, Norfolk, Yorkshire, Essex, Middlesex, York & Lancaster, Rifle Brigade; ASC. *Aden*: RA; 1/Hampshire, 2/R Dublin Fus., 3/Rifle Brigade. *NW Frontier (1908)*: 10th Hussars; RA; 1/Northumberland Fus., 1/R Warwicks, 1/West Yorks, 1/Seaforth, 2/Gordons, 1/R Munster Fus.

[5] Hauptmann von Brandis, 24th Brandenburg Regiment.

[6] Haldane had to pretend the most likely contingency was reinforcement of the North-West Frontier—notwithstanding the Anglo-Russian Convention.



A troop of Royal Scots Greys at war establishment, 33 strong; 12 such troops made a three-squadron regiment. (*Illustrated War News*, 1914)

staff system with the same division of responsibilities at every level of command: the General, or 'G', Staff, for operations, planning, staff duties, intelligence and training; the Adjutant-General's Department, or 'A' Staff, for all administrative matters concerned with men—recruitment, discipline, medical, welfare, manning; and the Quartermaster-General's Department, or 'Q' Staff, for all administrative matters concerned with materiél—transport, supply, quartering, stores, equipment. The heads of these three branches in the War Office formed the Army Council, with the Master-General of the Ordnance, responsible for armaments and fortifications, as the fourth military member.

To provide staff officers trained in the same system, the Staff College's syllabus was revised and enlarged, and an exactly parallel course was instituted at its Indian equivalent at Quetta. The systems to be adopted in war for operations and administration were promulgated in two important new manuals, *Field Service Regulations, Parts I and II.*

Clearly any expeditionary force to be deployed at the outbreak of war could only come from the Army stationed at home. An imbalance between its Regular units and those overseas had arisen over the previous decades in favour of overseas. This Haldane corrected so that, by 1914, there were, of Cavalry, 19 regiments at home and 12 abroad (nine in India, three in Africa), and of Infantry, 83 battalions at home (including Ireland and the Channel Islands) and 74 abroad (51 in India, Aden and Burma, five Far East, seven Mediterranean, ten Africa[7], one Bermuda), with supporting Arms and Services in proportion. These totals could provide in the UK the equivalent of six cavalry and 20 infantry brigades. By careful reorganisation of the Royal Artillery the number of batteries available on mobilisation was increased from 42 to 81.

The Army Service Corps had proved very efficient in South Africa but was further improved by a reorganisation of unit and ASC transport, plus schemes for requisitioning motor vehicles which, through subsidies to their peacetime owners, could be built to War Office specifications so that, on mobilisation, part-horsed, part-motorised ASC columns could be formed. The RAMC was reorganised to provide self-contained field ambulance units and clearing hospitals to accelerate casualty evacuation rearwards. The Army Nursing Service was improved and contingency plans drawn up for static and general hospitals. An entirely new and important branch of the Army, the Royal Flying Corps, was established in 1912 and would send five squadrons to France in 1914. Detailed plans for the recall of Reservists and requisitioning of horses to bring units up to war establishment were all thoroughly worked out and practised in peacetime. By these measures it was planned to mobilise from the Regular Army at home and its Reserve an expeditionary force of one cavalry and six all-Arms divisions, whose details will be considered later.

As the Regular Army's peacetime rôle was henceforth entirely confined to manning the Imperial garrisons and preparing the Expeditionary Force for war, Haldane next reorganised the part-time forces so that, when war came, they could effectively support the Regulars as a second line. The Militia was converted into the Special Reserve

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[7] Egypt 4 (1 Cavalry), Sudan 1, Mauritius 1, South Africa 4 (2 Cavalry).

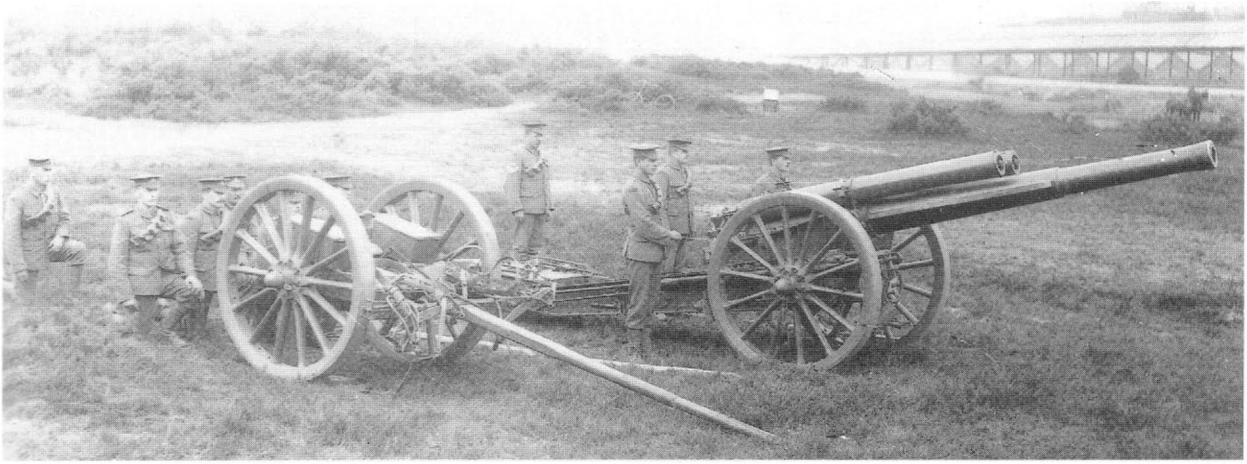
(SR) with an establishment of 74,000 for providing drafts for Regular units, filling officer vacancies on mobilisation, and men for certain rear echelon duties. To furnish a reserve of partially trained officers, the Volunteer Corps of schools and universities were converted into Officers' Training Corps. The Yeomanry, reorganised into 14 brigades, became the Regular Cavalry's second line. The Volunteers, with little organisation above unit level, became the Territorial Force (TF), raised and administered by County Associations under the Lords Lieutenant, but organised identically to the Regular Army, with its units permanently grouped into 14 divisions, each commanded by a Regular major-general with small Regular staffs. Its field artillery had to make do with obsolete weapons. Though the Territorials would have better training than the old Volunteers, they would not generally be fit to take the field until six months after mobilisation. However, they could provide a back-up for the Navy in home defence, thus sparing Regulars from that task, and could in due course reinforce the Expeditionary Force either by units or as complete divisions as they became operational.

In the event things worked out rather differently. The Cabinet decided to hold back two Regular divisions for home defence during the reduced BEF's move to France, but they did follow on thereafter. Haldane, whose great work was largely completed by 1912, became Lord Chancellor, but had to see his TF plans set aside by Kitchener, appointed War Secretary on the outbreak of war, who decided to raise his 'New Armies' from civilian volunteers. Some TF units were in action by November 1914; others relieved Regular battalions in overseas garrisons or were retained for home defence.

The return of Regular units from the Mediterranean and Africa, with the addition of Household troops not included in the original BEF, enabled the formation of another cavalry division and the 7th Division, which were both to play a vital part in the First Battle of Ypres in October, and the 8th Division which arrived in France in late November. The overseas units in these divisions differed from those in the original BEF in being entirely composed of pre-war serving soldiers without any Reservists.

The Army in India also underwent a modernisation programme from 1903 which included a reorganisation of its British and Indian units into permanent formations, as done at home, totalling seven divisions and five cavalry brigades. Its rôle up to 1907 was to meet the Russian threat, but thereafter to contain Afghanistan and the frontier tribes. In 1913 the Indian Government was invited to consider what assistance it might afford in the event of a European war. As a result of undertakings given, the Indian Corps of two infantry and two cavalry divisions, each brigade having a British unit (also without Reservists), began to arrive at Ypres in late October.

Another of Haldane's preparatory measures, though not directly relevant to the BEF, was the 1907 proposal to make the General Staff an Imperial one by training Dominion officers from



60-pdr. gun with detachment and limber of a four-gun Royal Garrison Artillery heavy battery in peacetime. This was the heaviest gun possessed by the BEF. (NAM)

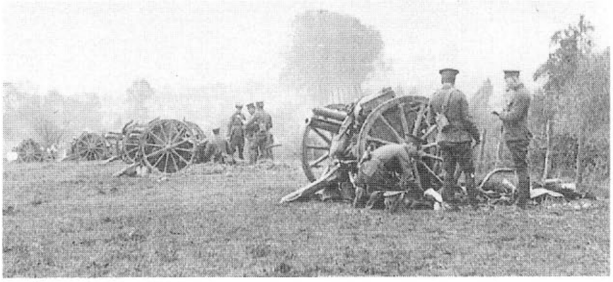
Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa at the Staff College and to attach trained British staff officers to Dominion forces, so that uniformity of organisation, equipment and system should prevail throughout the Empire. This would pay dividends from 1915 when Dominion troops appeared on the battle fronts.

One of the most important tasks completed before the war by the Committee of Imperial Defence's Secretariat, in conjunction with the Service and other ministries, was the publication of the *War Book*, which laid down in the greatest detail all that was required to put the nation and its services on a war footing so that, when the time came, all concerned knew exactly what to do. Never before had Britain been so well prepared—and all in one decade and at a time of financial stringency. That the Army entered the Great War at such a high state of readiness and efficiency, compared with the Crimean and Boer Wars, was due in great part to perhaps its most capable-ever Secretary of State, R. B. Haldane.

The Expeditionary Force

Organisation

The formations earmarked in peacetime for the BEF were located as follows. The *Cavalry Division's* four brigades were quartered in Aldershot, Tidworth, Kent/London, and Ireland, the independent 5 Cavalry Brigade in eastern England. The *1st Division's* three infantry brigades and two of the *2nd Division's* were in the Aldershot Command, the latter's third in London. The *3rd Division* came from Tidworth and the south coast. The *4th Division* had one brigade from Colchester, the other two from Kentish garrison towns. The *5th Division* and two brigades of the *6th Division* were stationed in Ireland, the latter's third in Lichfield and Yorkshire. Four unbrigaded battalions, originally designated Lines of Communication defence troops but formed into 19 Independent Brigade after arriving in France, came from Portland, Woolwich and Scotland (2).



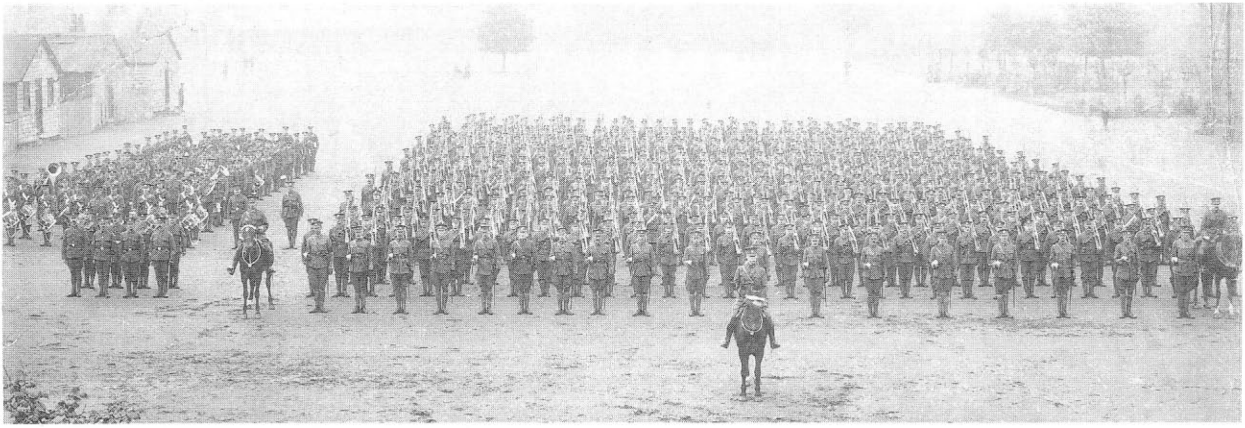
A Royal Horse Artillery battery (J) ready for action at Wytschaete near Ypres, 31 October 1914. Each 13-pdr. (QF) gun has its limber nearest the camera; one gun is out of sight. (IWM)

The *Cavalry Division* had: a headquarters (96 strong); four brigades, each of three regiments and a signal troop, totalling 6,872; HQ RA (20) and two RHA brigades (1,362); RE field squadron (191) and RE signal squadron (206); HQ ASC (26); four RAMC field ambulances (496); total strength 9,269 all ranks, 9,815 horses, 24 guns, 24 machine-guns, 425 wagons, 23 cars, 412 bicycles, 18 motor-cycles.

An *all-Arms Division* had: a headquarters (82); three infantry brigades, each of four battalions (12,165); HQ RA (22), three RFA brigades (2,385), one RFA (howitzer) brigade (755), one RGA heavy battery and ammunition column (198), and the divisional ammunition column (568); HQ RE (13), two RE field companies (434) and one RE signal company (162); one cavalry squadron (159); ASC divisional train (428); three RAMC field ambulances (702); total 18,073 all ranks, 5,592 horses, 76 guns, 24 machine-guns, 648 carts/wagons, nine cars, 275 bicycles, nine motor-cycles.

At unit level (lieutenant-colonel's command) a *cavalry regiment* of 26 officers and 523 men had a headquarters (48), machine-gun section (27, two guns), and three squadrons (each 158 in four troops). Its horses totalled 528 riding, 74 draught, and six pack. Vehicles included 18 carts/wagons and 15 bicycles.

An *RHA brigade* of 19 officers and 662 had a headquarters (44), two batteries (each 205 in three two-gun sections) and an ammunition column (227). Its horses totalled 277 riding, 502 draught. Vehicles (exclusive of 12 gun-carriages and limbers) totalled 73 carts/wagons and 12 bicycles. An RFA brigade of 23 officers and 772 had a headquarters (36), three batteries (each 198 in three two-gun sections) and an ammunition column (158). Its horses totalled 198 riding, 550 draught. Vehicles



Peacetime eight-company infantry battalion, 1906; 617 all ranks on parade. The four-company war establishment was formed by combining two companies and mobilising Reservists to increase strength to 1,007 all ranks, i.e. just over half again of the men pictured. One platoon at war establishment equalled two-thirds of one of these companies. (Author's collection)

(excluding 18 gun-carriages and limbers) totalled 75 carts/wagons and five bicycles. An RFA (howitzer) brigade had 40 men and 51 horses fewer. An RGA heavy battery had only four guns.

The *infantry battalion* of 30 officers and 977[8] had been reorganised in 1913, the old eight-company organisation being no longer suitable for the modern battlefield's need for increased dispersion and hence greater decentralisation. Although the old companies had been sub-divided into two half-companies under subalterns, each of two sections under sergeants, they had usually manoeuvred as a whole under their captains; this was inflexible and, if decentralised, a section at war strength of up to 20 was too large for a sergeant to control effectively when extended under fire. Henceforth a battalion had a headquarters (81[9]), machine-gun section (18, two guns), and four companies (each 227 in four platoons). Each platoon had a subaltern, a sergeant, and four ten-strong sections, each under a corporal. The battalion horses totalled 13 riding, 34 draught and nine pack. Vehicles totalled 12 carts/wagons, four mobile kitchens, and nine bicycles.

The *RE field sub-units* (major's command) providing sapper support, including a bridging capability, were subdivided into a headquarters and four troops/sections. A field squadron had a necessarily higher proportion of horses—104 riding, 92 draught—compared with a company's 17 riding, 55 draught and four pack. Their vehicles were, respectively: 24 carts/wagons, 44 bicycles; 18 carts/wagons, 33 bicycles.

The *RE Signal Service* provided communications for all headquarters down to brigades. Each cavalry brigade's independent troop (24) had 14 riding horses and two draught, one wagon and six bicycles. The divisional squadron had three troops, providing respectively wireless, cable, despatch-riders/visual means, which required 80 riding horses, 70 draught, 14 pack, 19 carts/wagons, two cars, 34 bicycles, six motor-cycles. A divisional company had a headquarters, one 49-strong section providing cable and manning the divisional signal office, and three 25-strong sections for each infantry brigade. It had 33 riding horses, 39 draught, eight pack, 12 carts/wagons, 32 bicycles and nine motor-cycles.

The *ASC divisional train*, responsible for transport and supply, consisted of a headquarters (11), headquarters company (161) providing baggage and supply sections for the non-infantry elements, and three companies (each 85 with similar sections) for the infantry brigades. It had 66 riding horses, 65 draught, 142 carts/wagons, four cars, 30 bicycles.

An *RAMC field ambulance* had three sections, each of a stretcher-bearer sub-division (42, six six-strong squads) and a tent sub-division (38, for 50 patients). It had 14 riding horses, 52 draught, 10 ambulances, 13 carts/wagons, one bicycle.

Besides its GHQ and fighting formations the BEF had a number of units classed as *Army Troops*: three squadrons of Irish Horse (SR); six RGA siege batteries; RE signals for GHQ and Corps HQ communications and two bridging trains; one infantry battalion (1/Camerons); an ASC train; two field ambulances; five squadrons, Royal Flying Corps. Providing rearwards administrative support and base facilities were the *Lines of Communications Troops* (L of C): RE railway, fortress, works, postal and printing sub-units; an RFC aircraft park; ASC ammunition, supply, horse and motor transport, butchery, bakery and administrative sub-units; RAMC hospitals, ambulance trains, medical stores and hospital ships; AOC stores companies; pay and veterinary establishments and military field prisons; everything, in fact, needed for the BEF to be self-sufficient and independent of its Allies.

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[8] Including RAMC (one officer and 4), AOC (2).

[9] Including signallers, pioneers, drivers and batmen but not drummers/buglers, bandsmen who were held on company strengths.

Commanders

In the upper command echelons of the BEF was a new generation of general officers who mostly had perceived their forebears' failings in the Boer War from brigade or unit level, the most senior having commanded divisions. The BEF's C-in-C designate, FM Sir John French, had earned a deservedly high reputation in South Africa commanding the Cavalry Division; had subsequently held the most important command at home, at Aldershot; and in 1912 had acceded to the Army's most senior appointment, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. He was a brave leader, devoted to the Army, especially the Cavalry, and popular with the troops. He was, however, essentially a late 19th century general; before he assumed command of the BEF one of his chief subordinates, Haig, expressed 'grave doubts whether his temper was sufficiently even or his military knowledge sufficiently thorough to discharge properly the very different duties which will devolve upon him during operations with Allies'[10]. Haig's view came to be shared by others and substantiated by events. Nor were French's failings likely to be compensated by his Chief of Staff, Murray, who had been unpopular as a divisional commander, could not stand up to French, and later had a nervous breakdown; or by his Sub-Chief-of-Staff, Henry Wilson, very capable but an intriguer and an arch Francophile.

Douglas Haig himself, appointed GOC Aldershot in 1912 and thereby I Corps commander on mobilisation, had attracted attention in South Africa for his staff work and command of mounted troops. He had studied his profession deeply and played a vital part in Haldane's reorganisation from within the War Office. He had done effective work as Chief-of-Staff, India and at Aldershot; but he lacked French's knack with soldiers and had performed disappointingly in the 1912 Manoeuvres, where he had been out-generalled by Grierson, nominated II Corps commander.

The BEF's Corps Commanders: Lt.-Gen. Sir Douglas Haig (I Corps) and Lt.-Gen. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien (II Corps).

Grierson died suddenly on reaching France and was replaced by Smith-Dorrien, who had commanded a brigade and a division in South Africa and had been Haig's able predecessor at Aldershot before taking over Southern Command. While Haig had contributed much to the Army's modernisation from Whitehall, Smith-Dorrien had been equally effective at barracks level—improving the soldier's welfare, status, and training, particularly as a thinking man rather than an automaton. His handling of II Corps at Mons and Le Cateau was to prove he was a worthy choice, but his appointment—by Kitchener, without French's approval—and his decisions further aggravated French's animosity, which he had first incurred in 1907 by altering French's regime at Aldershot and by their conflicting views on the tactical handling of cavalry in modern war.

Officers

Like their seniors, regimental officers from lieutenant-colonel down to second-lieutenant still tended to come from similar social backgrounds to their predecessors, i.e. some 60 per cent from the gentry (some landed, others less so) and Service

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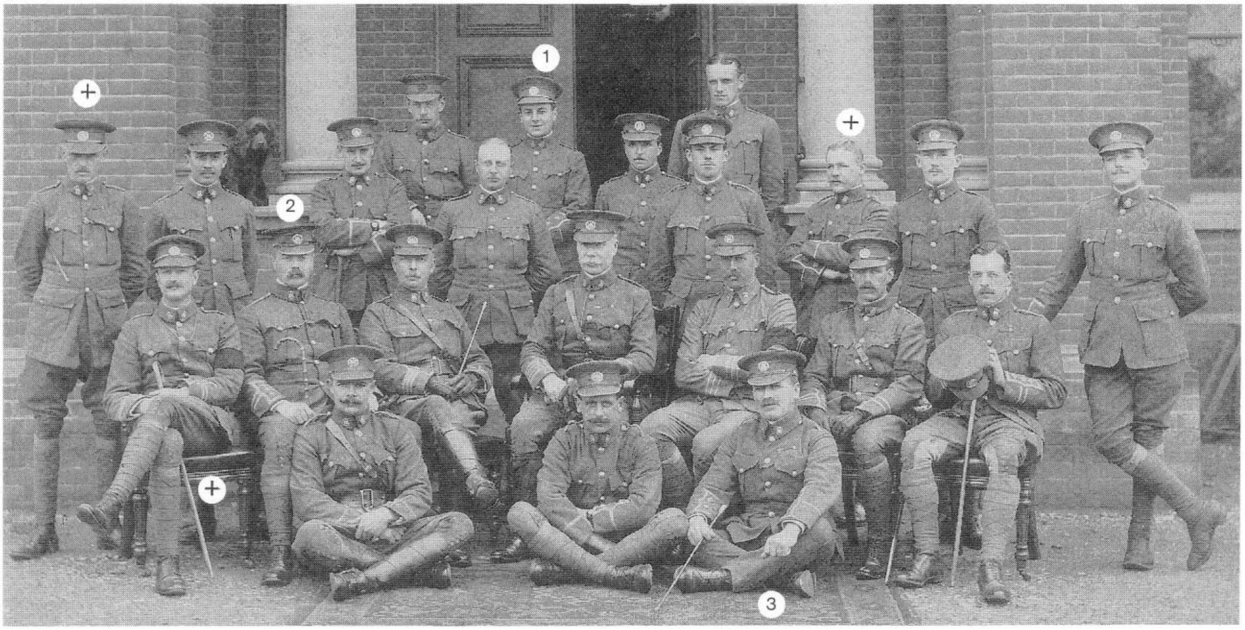
[10] Quoted J. Terraine, *Douglas Haig* (1963), p.79.



Typical officers of a county regiment (2/Northamptonshire), 1906. This battalion, in Egypt in August 1914, arrived in France with 8th Division but three of these officers (marked +) were killed in September–October with the 1st Battalion. Socially atypical were (1) a baronet, (2) with titled connections, (3) the ex-ranker Quartermaster. (Author's collection)

families, and nearly 30 per cent from professional circumstances (clergy, medical, legal, civil service). This was almost inevitable because, except for a few cases, the Sandhurst and Woolwich courses were fee-paying, like the public schools* from which most entrants came; once commissioned, a private income was, in some regiments, essential, in others, desirable for an officer to maintain the standards required of him. In any case the officer corps as a whole (and, up to a point, the rank and file) expected an officer to behave like a gentleman. Pte. Frank Richards, when charged with an offence, made a sharp distinction between two officers involved in the case: one, a Regular subaltern of his regiment, who 'proved himself as much a gentleman' as the other, an RE Militia captain, 'had been a pig'[11].

Within this social exclusivity there were of course gradations: the Cavalry, Guards and Rifles attracting more aristocrats, rich men and Etonians than Line county regiments or field gunners, though this is not to say there were no Etonians or men of title in those categories. All had the attributes of gentlemen or, if not bred to them, were expected to acquire them.

Where the post-1902 officer differed from his 19th century counterpart was in his man-management and professional competence. Frank Richards wrote admiringly of the Royal Welch's officers, 'landed gentry of North Wales and the Welsh Border' who 'took a keen interest in the men and fostered all kinds of sport. They were strict disciplinarians but were far from treating us with contempt. The case was one of mutual trust'[11]. A sergeant of the East Lancashire Regiment wrote to his officer's widow that 'no officer could have had more respect and confidence from his men . . . ever kind and cheerful, always cool, cheering up his men, without thought for his own safety[12]. Greater application to duties, bred of Boer War failings and required by the new generation of senior officers, resulted in a higher degree of professionalism than before—though usually understated rather than ostentatiously keen, and still leaving time for the off-duty pursuits of their class. Most officers were motivated, not by careerist hopes of self-advancement, but by a desire to do their best for their company or battery, regiment or battalion; command of the latter was the summit of the majority's military ambition. By some civilians' standards many seemed narrow-minded and some would fail in France, but the average officer was straightforward, a leader not a driver, and ever mindful of his men.

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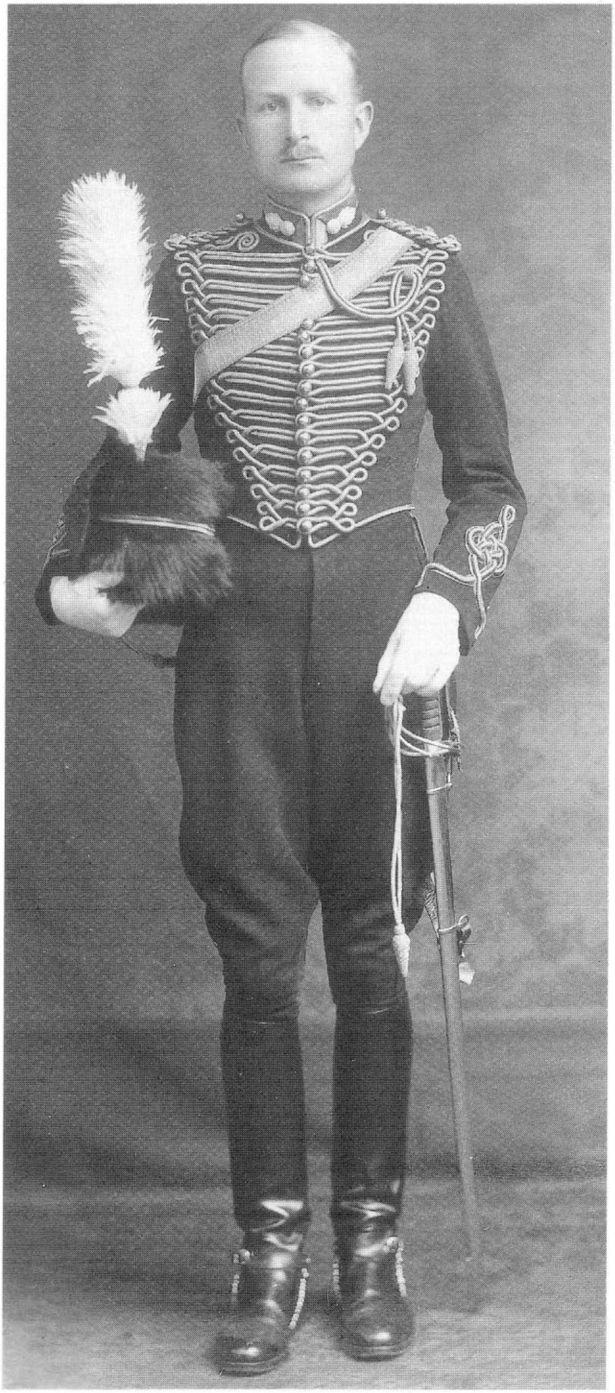
[11] *Old Soldier Sahib.*

*The schools which lost the greatest number of old boys killed between August and November 1914 were: Eton 65, Wellington 38, Charterhouse and Harrow 21 each, Rugby 20, Clifton 19, Haileybury 18.

[12] Quoted D. Ascoli, *The Mons Star* (1981), p. 27.

Men

Although the 1881 localisation of the Line infantry had succeeded in manning such regiments' SR and TF battalions with local men, many in the Regular battalions came from outside a regiment's district. Around 1905 only 30 per cent of the Royal Welch Fusiliers' Regulars were Welshmen, the remainder being half Londoners and half from Birmingham; by 1914 the proportions had changed so that the RWF was jokingly known as the Birmingham Fusiliers. Some 80 per cent of the Manchesters had been unemployed Liverpool Irish, a race which featured in many regiments besides its own. Some Highland regiments had nearly as many Cockneys as Scotsmen. In many English county regiments as few as a quarter came from that county. Other regiments and corps were not localised.



RHA officer in full dress; such officers usually equated themselves socially with Cavalry. (NAM)

The majority of soldiers came from the urban or agricultural working class and enlisted to escape unemployment, a miserable home, sometimes the police or a girl; others joined to see the world or to follow a father or brother; some were attracted by the uniform (full dress being much in evidence up to 1914), or enlisted from an adventurous spirit; a few were motivated by tales and pictures of bygone military epics, like Rorke's Drift or the Charge of the Light Brigade. Discipline was strict, barrack life uncompromising, and overseas climates often intolerable; yet the life was often no worse and frequently better than what the recruit had discarded. He was properly fed, he found friends, self-respect and a sense of belonging in the regimental family. Once used to it, the focus of most Regular soldiers' lives and loyalties ceased to be their class, home or family, and centred on their barrack room, company or squadron, and their regiment.

Though some regiments formed close alliances, Regulars usually had little time for other regiments, tolerated sailors but hated marines; were indifferent to civilians (unless female); and believed that foreign parts won by the sword should be kept by the sword. Lord Curzon was universally detested by the British rank and file in India for his insistence, when Viceroy, on their better treatment of Indians. The 9th Lancers, who had particularly incurred his displeasure, were resoundingly applauded when they marched past him at a Delhi Durbar looking straight ahead when ordered 'Eyes Right'[13].

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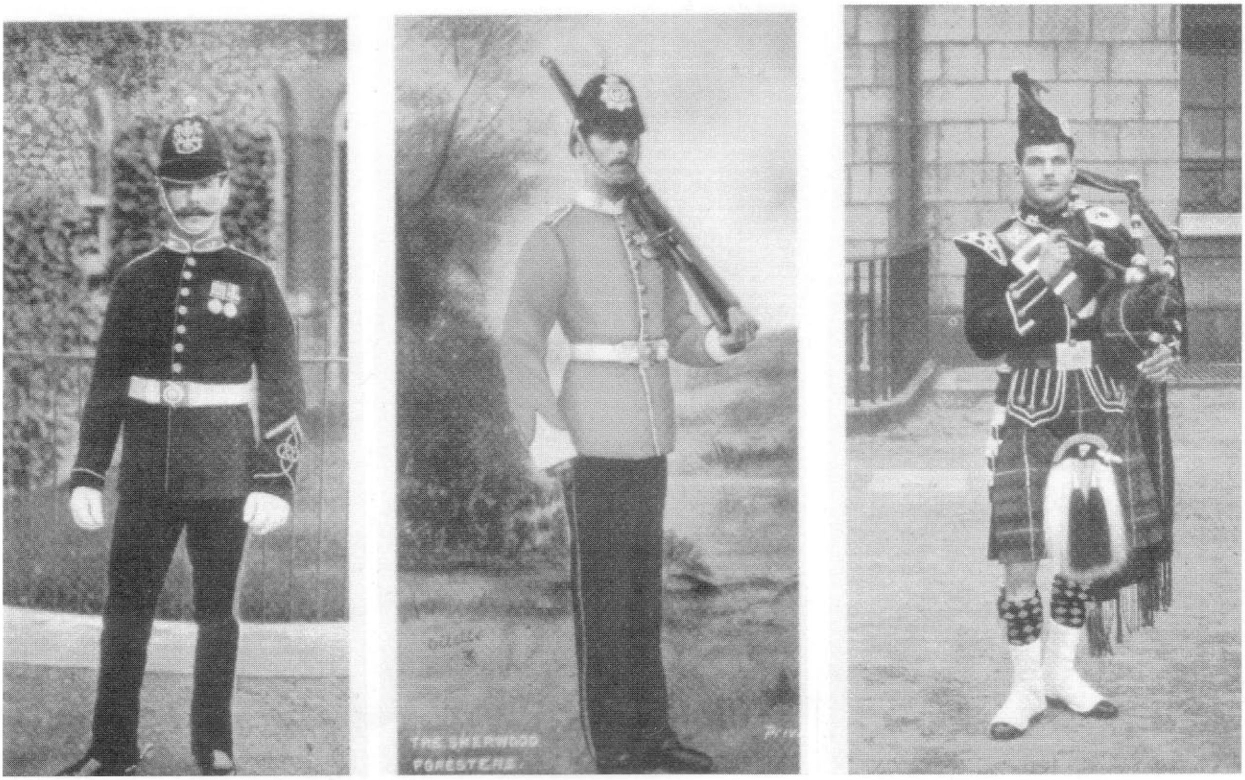
[13] Matters were exacerbated by Lady Curzon's alleged but widely reported remark that the two ugliest things in India were the water buffalo and the British private soldier.

Most Regulars had little education, simple tastes, and knew exactly how to exist within the system. They were humorous, stoical and loyal to their comrades and the superiors they respected. When they were 'time-expired' with their Colour service finished, initial thankfulness often gave way to regret that they had not signed on to complete their 'twelve' or even 'twenty-one'. Thus for many Reservists their recall in 1914 was like rejoining a long-lost family. Once in France the stress of battle, shared hardships and the loss of comrades, often of many years' standing, softened the social distinctions between ranks and increased mutual regard without diminishing discipline.

Between the officers and privates stood what Kipling rightly called 'the back-bone of the Army, the non-commissioned man', from lance-corporal to regimental sergeant-major. Although sergeants and above had their own mess and corporals their club, they inevitably existed much closer to the men than officers. When a man put up his first 'stripe', he had to have the personality to distance himself from his former equals and at the same time earn, by his example and conduct, their respect and obedience—particularly testing if the privates were older with longer service. Later, as a proficient, experienced sergeant, he had to make the delicate adjustment between tactfully guiding a green

Cavalry officers in France. Brig.-Gen. Briggs, commanding 1 Cavalry Brigade, left, with three officers of the 11th Hussars. (IWM)


THE SHERWOOD FORESTERS.

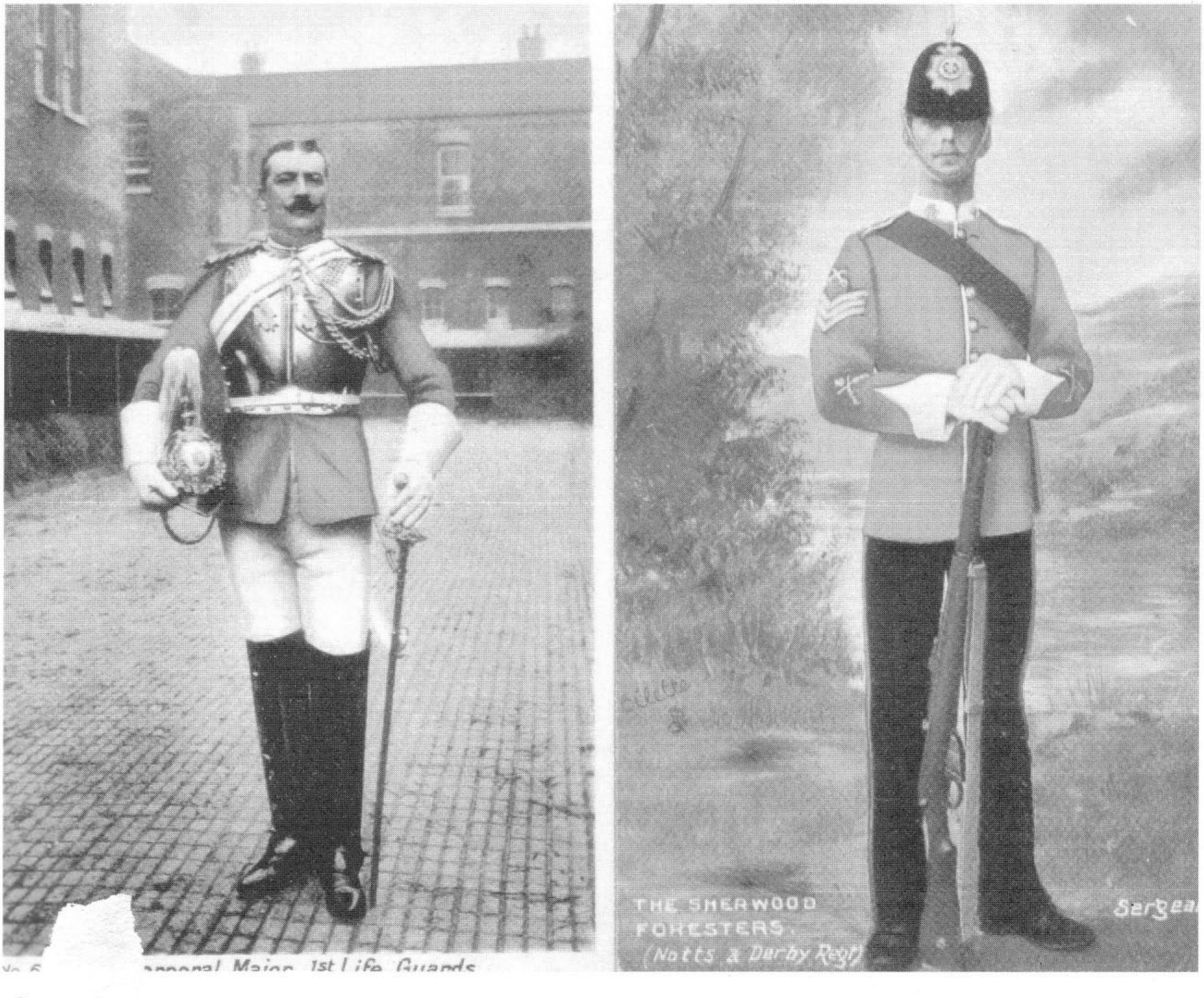
Two old soldiers, one young, in full dress. From left: Gunner, RFA; Private, Sherwood Foresters; Piper, Gordons. (Author's collection)

young subaltern straight from Sandhurst while deferring to his superior rank. How good most senior NCOs were was proved at First Ypres when, with their officers—the decision-makers—falling as casualties, they took command of platoons and companies and fought on, chiefly to make sure that whoever else gave way it would not be their regiment. When the NCOs were gone a private might rise to the occasion, as did Drummer Bent of 1/East Lancashire (though a Suffolk man) who won the VC for taking over his platoon and holding its position.

Weapons and Equipment

After the Boer War it was decided to replace the existing Lee-Enfield rifles and carbines with a universal rifle for all branches, and in 1902 the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE) was approved. This was 3ft $8\frac{9}{16}$ins. long and weighed 8lb $2\frac{1}{2}$oz, five inches shorter and about a pound lighter than its predecessor. It had a ten-round magazine loaded by five-round chargers and a backsight graduated to 2,000 yards. It underwent some subsequent modifications but was used universally throughout the BEF. Originally it had a $12\frac{1}{8}$in.-bladed sword bayonet, but from 1907 this gave way to a $17\frac{1}{8}$in. blade with a quillon, although the latter was dispensed with from 1913. One hundred and fifty rounds of .303 in. ammunition could be carried on an infantryman, 90 on a cavalryman, with a further 100 rounds per man in unit reserve packed in 50-round cotton bandoliers which could be slung on a man when required.

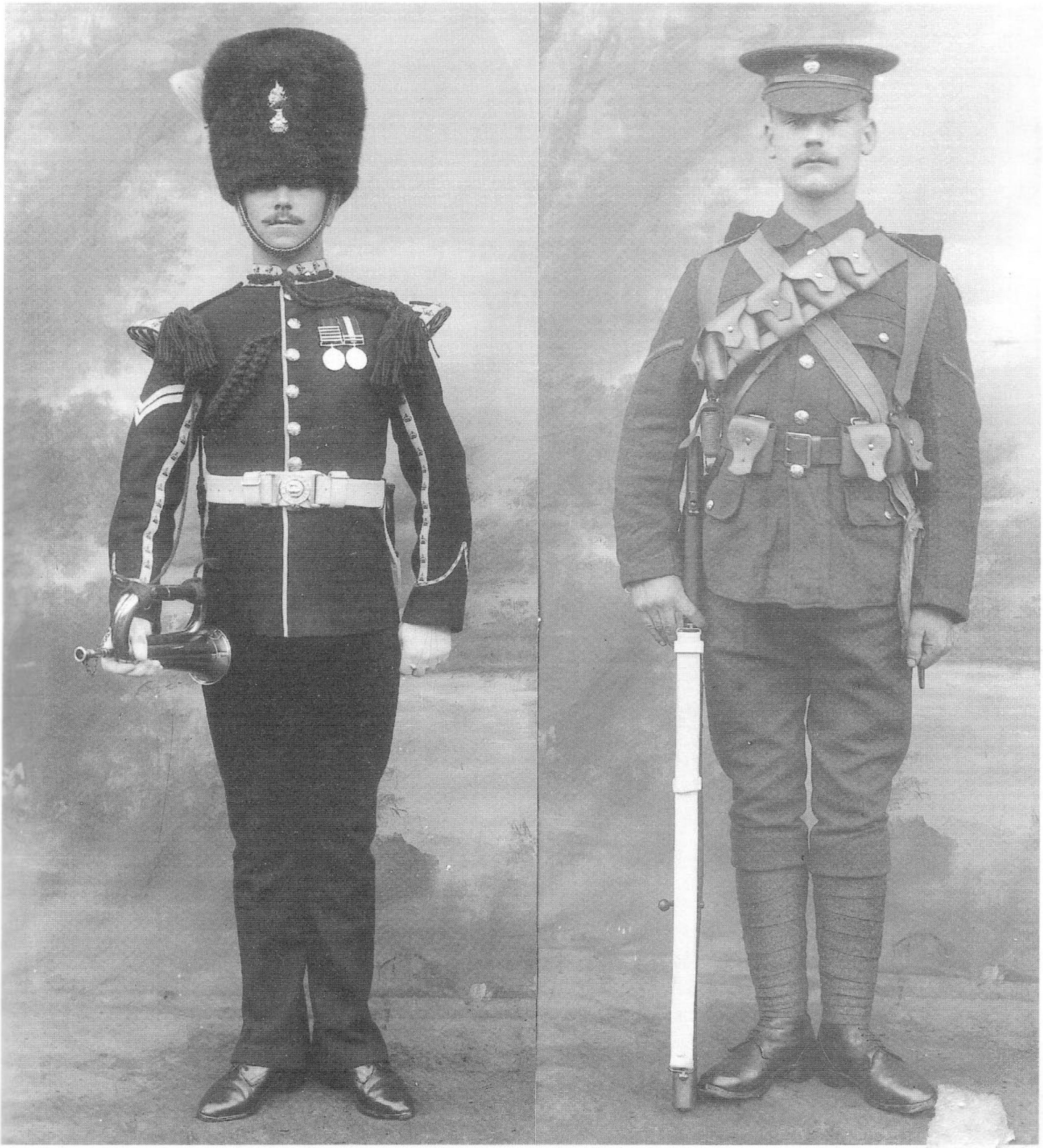
Though the cavalry sword had been little used in South Africa, much thought was given post-war to devising a better weapon. Eventually in 1908 a new



Senior NCOs: Corporal-Major, 1st Life Guards; Sergeant, Sherwood Foresters. (Author's collection)

pattern was approved: primarily a thrusting weapon, it had a straight, $35\frac{1}{4}$ in. blade, a sheet steel guard and a plastic composition grip shaped to a man's hand with a wood-lined steel scabbard. Officers had a similar pattern (from 1912) with a more decorative hilt. This was the best cavalry sword ever issued, but there would not be much use for it. Nor would there be for the lance, restored to such regiments for active service, amid controversy, in 1909.

Although most infantry officers had discarded swords in South Africa in favour of rifles, post-war they reverted to sword (1895 pattern) and revolver as their official armament and indeed on mobilisation were ordered to sharpen their swords.

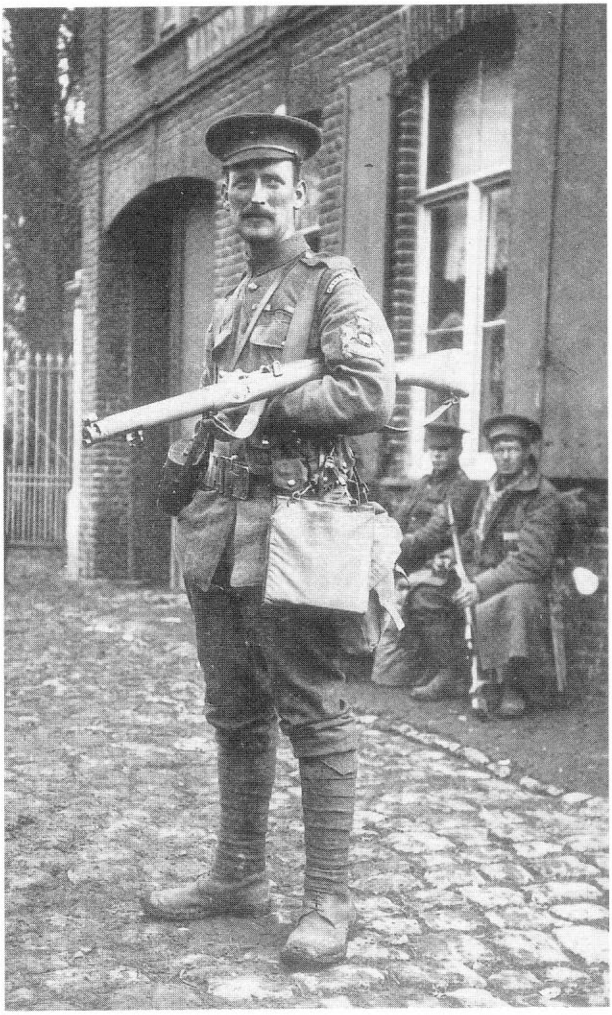


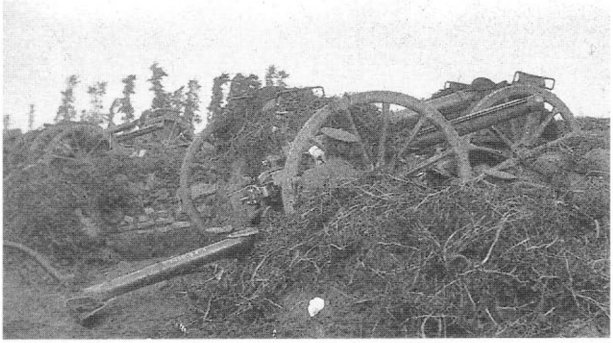
Junior NCOs: Corporal-Drummer and Lance-Corporal, Royal Welch Fusiliers, in full dress and service dress with 1903 equipment. (NAM)

Revolvers were mostly the .38 in. Webley Mk. IV.

The Boer War Maxim machine-gun underwent improvements post-war to produce the tripod-mounted Vickers-Maxim (range 3,000yds., 500 rounds per minute) which in turn gave way to the 1912 Vickers Mk. I, but financial limitations sent the BEF to war with the Vickers-Maxim. An infantry section of one officer, two NCOs, 13 privates and two drivers carried its two guns, a rangefinder and some ammunition in a two-horse General Service (GS) limbered wagon, having another two-horse cart for further ammunition. A cavalry section had an extra three privates and six drivers, all ranks being individually mounted, and four four-horse GS limbered wagons, which also carried six packsaddles for use on lead horses.

The senior warrant officer of the senior infantry regiment: Regimental Sergeant-Major Parkin, 1/Grenadier Guards, near Ypres in October 1914. (IWM)

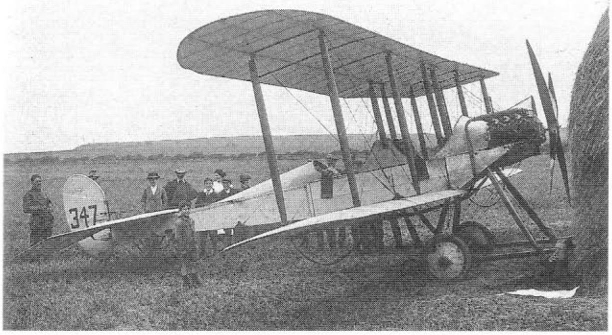




RFA 18-pdr. (QF) guns dug in at Messines, October 1914. Note limber on far side. (IWM)

Regular artillery batteries were completely re-armed between 1906 and 1914 with quick-firing (QF) guns. By confining a gun's recoil to its barrel through a hydraulic attachment, the need to run up the gun and re-lay after each shot was eliminated. The crew could remain close to the gun throughout firing and could be protected by a gunshield. A gearing system allowed some lateral traverse without moving the gun, and the sighting consisted of: a telescopic sight for direct fire, i.e. at targets visible to the layer; and for indirect fire controlled by a forward observer with guns concealed from the enemy, a clinometer for elevation and dial sight for lateral alterations. Thus the rate of fire and accuracy were greatly increased, the crew were better protected, and concealment and deployment much enhanced. The new field gun (QF) came in two types: 13-pdrs. for RHA and 18-pdrs. for RFA batteries. The ranges were, respectively, 6,100 and 6,200yds. Both fired only shrapnel; fuses could be set so that the shell would penetrate defences before bursting or burst soon after discharge, giving the effect of the old case shot, though much improved. One six-horse gun and limber with two six-horse ammunition limbered wagons formed a sub-section under a sergeant (No. 1) with an NCO in charge of wagons (No. 7), nine gunners, nine drivers, plus three horse-holders in RHA sub-sections as all their gunners were individually mounted except Nos. 8–11 on the first wagon. RFA gunners were all on the vehicles.

Two other new weapons were the RFA howitzer batteries' 4.5 in. howitzer, firing shrapnel or high explosive (HE) up to 7,000yds., and the RGA heavy batteries' 60-pdr., also firing shrapnel or HE up to 9,500 yards.



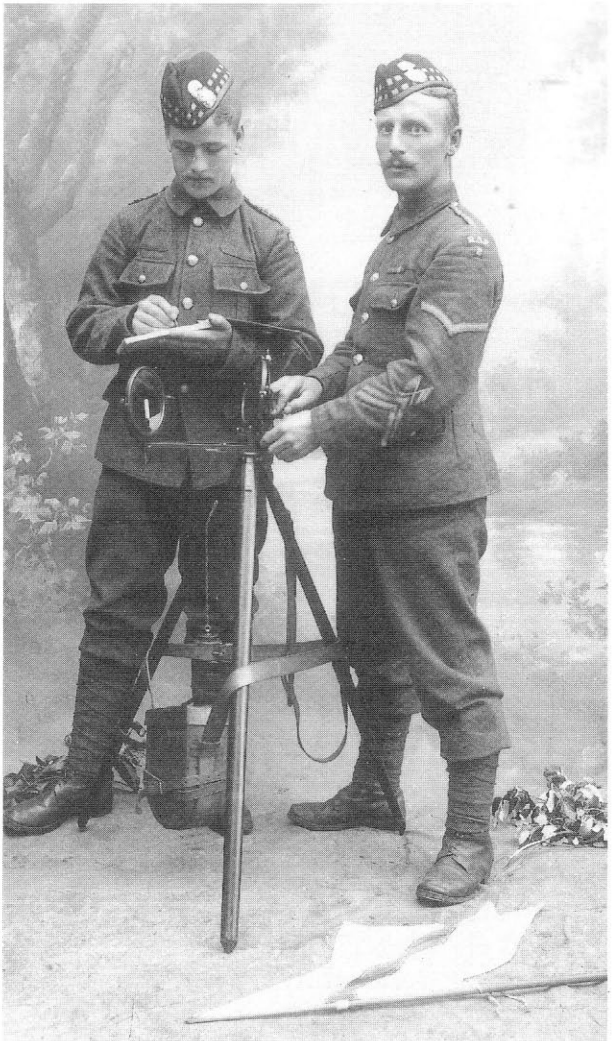
The first Royal Flying Corps aeroplane to land in France, a BE2 with 70 h.p. Renault engine, piloted by Maj. Harvey-Kelly. (IWM)

Of the RFC's 12-aircraft squadrons, Nos. 2 and 4 had BE2s, No. 3 Blériots and Henri Farmans, and No. 5 Henri Farmans, Avros and BE8s[14]. All were unarmed except for the revolvers and sometimes rifles carried by pilots and observers; bombing, or rather grenade-dropping with the 4lb Marten-Hale grenade was still at the experimental stage, the squadrons' primary task being reconnaissance. Navigation was by map and not infrequently by landing and asking the way! Communication was initially either by landing or dropping messages, but by 18 September on the Aisne some aircraft were fitted with wireless which, with an artillery observer on board, greatly assisted counter-battery fire. Another RFC innovation, only three days before, had been the taking of the first aerial photographs of German positions.

Communications methods and equipment provided by the RE Signal Service were predominantly line telegraphy (Morse), visual—heliograph, flags and night lamps—and motor-cycle despatch-riders. There was limited telephone and wireless equipment but neither was as yet very reliable. Buzzer telephones were provided for artillery. Other units had only visual means, supplemented by galloper/runner—in infantry battalions usually the drummers/buglers—and at the lowest level by whistle signals or, more rarely, trumpet/bugle calls. The cable wagons and other vehicles of divisional signal sub-units were all horsed but rearwards of division signals were mostly mechanised.

Transport vehicles were: the four-horse, four-wheeled GS wagon, the two- or four (cavalry)-horse GS limbered wagon, and the two-horse, two-wheeled cart of various types—Maltese for medical equipment, water, forage, mobile kitchens, and small-arms ammunition (SAA). GS wagons for baggage, stores and supplies in RFA units and battalions had ASC drivers. RE field companies had six-horse pontoon (2) and trestle (1) wagons, each carrying two pontoons/trestles with superstructures, providing 75ft. of medium bridge. Additional bridging capacity came from an RE Bridging Train whose 42 pontoons and 16 trestles could make respectively 210yds. medium/105yds. heavy bridge and 40yds. medium/20yds. heavy bridge. The RAMC two-heavy-horse, four-wheeled ambulance wagon (with ASC driver)

Regimental signallers, 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers, in 1904–06 service dress with heliograph and (on ground) signalling flag. (NAM)



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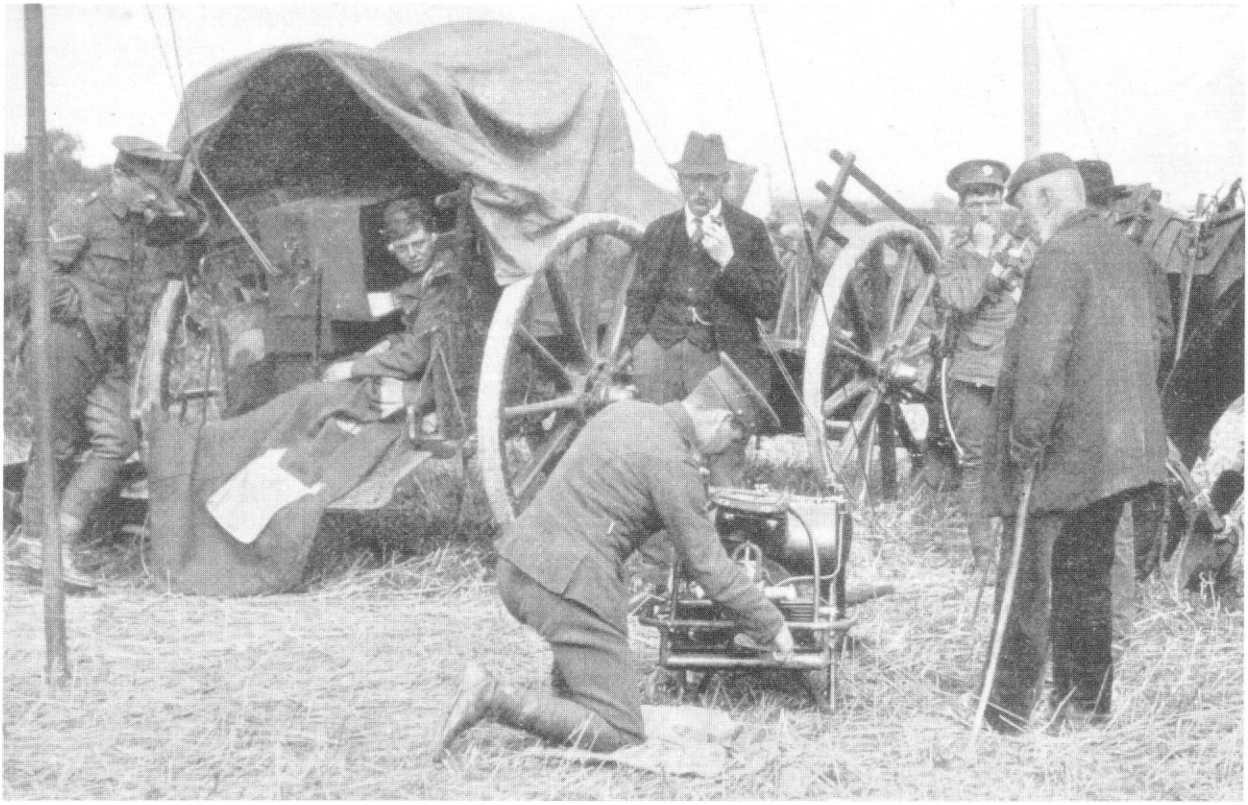
[14] No. 1 was converting from airships to aeroplanes. It did not reach France till later.



Royal Engineers' signallers operating a wireless telegraphy station on peacetime manoeuvres. In the wagon is the operator with headset. The kneeling sapper works a petrol-driven dynamo for supplying power. Aerial mast at left. (Author's collection)

could carry either four cases lying, 12 sitting, or two lying with four sitting.

On mobilisation the BEF had 1,200 lorries requisitioned from commercial sources, mostly for use on the L of C[15]. In early October French asked for 300 buses, which duly arrived still in their peacetime paintwork and were formed into four ASC bus companies for transporting infantry. So short of motor transport was the pre-war Army that on the outbreak of war the War Office asked the Royal Automobile Club to find volunteer drivers with cars willing to go to France as staff cars. Among the volunteers were a former officer and famous racing driver, Toby Rawlinson, and the Duke of Westminster, complete with chauffeur and Rolls-Royce. Similarly recruited were a number of civilian motor-cyclists who volunteered to act as despatch-riders with the RE Signal Service.

Mounted and dismounted soldiers' personal equipment was completely redesigned after the Boer War, resulting in the 1903 and 1908 patterns. A new, universal khaki serge service dress was introduced for most purposes from 1902. However the late Victorian full dress of scarlet, blue or green was retained, with some modifications, up to 1914 for certain parades and walking-out. Details of equipment and dress appear under the Plate commentaries.

General Service (GS) wagons, the most common transport vehicle, with loads covered by tilts and drawn by heavy horses in Flanders, October 1914. (IWM)

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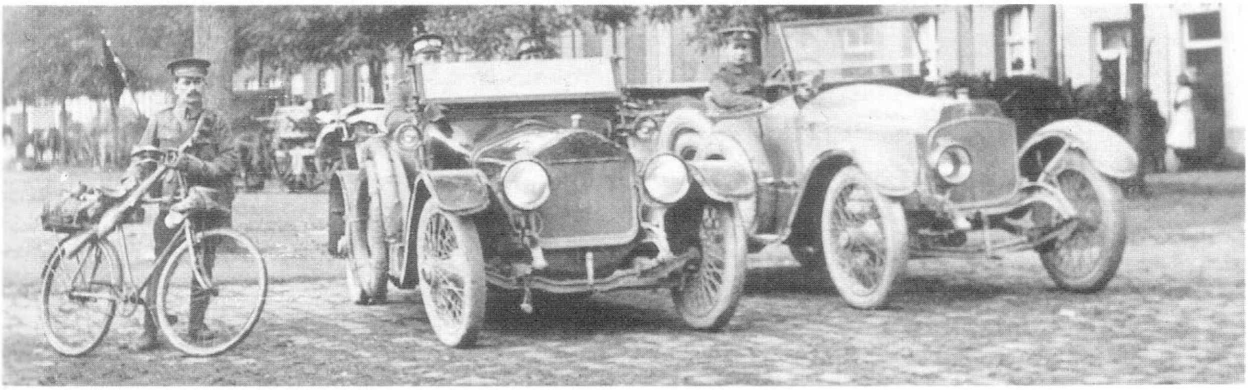
[15] Five German armies in the West only had 500 lorries in all.

One of an infantry battalion's two two-horse water-carts on peacetime manoeuvres, 1908. (Author's collection)

Requisitioned London buses conveying 2/Royal Warwickshire through Dickebusch to Ypres, November 1914. (IWM)



Cars and cyclist of HQ 2nd Cavalry Division at Messines, October 1914. (IWM)

Royal Engineers' motor-cycle despatch-rider and French soldier.(IWM)

Training and Tactics

In the past few units had been grouped into formations before war broke out. The BEF's brigades and divisions were established pre-1914 so that commanders, staffs and units had all worked together in peacetime. However, due to the spread of garrison towns in the UK and the limited size of authorised training areas, opportunities for training at brigade level and above were limited except in the Aldershot Command and on Salisbury Plain. Another past training weakness had been lack of mutual knowledge and co-operation between different Arms and Services.

Under the new training policy Army manoeuvres were held every autumn over large tracts of countryside temporarily requisitioned under the Military Manoeuvres Act. Even these were

Divisional training, 1912. 1/Northamptonshire 'swinging along like a great machine' (Gen. Smith-Dorrien)—valuable practice for the retreat from Mons. Note the men's shorts, a practice brought back from India in 1910. (Author's collection)

somewhat restricted but they did exercise commanders and staffs and afford the different branches an insight of each other's capabilities. These manoeuvres were the culmination of a progressive annual cycle beginning each winter with individual training—physical fitness, musketry, bayonet fighting, signalling, scouting, riding, gun drill, etc.—leading on to sub-unit training, followed by unit exercises. These gave way to brigade training, then divisional training and finally Army manoeuvres, after which the cycle restarted.

One subject that received close attention between 1902 and 1914 was musketry, or rifle shooting. In South Africa, with its extensive fields of fire and view, most infantry shooting had been at long ranges by volleys or individual snap-shooting at fleeting targets. Similar shooting had been the norm in the Sudan and on the North-West Frontier[16]. Once it was appreciated that the next most likely theatre of war would be Europe against the German Army, who would muster great strength but whose tactics were not known for the dispersion learned in South Africa, it was realised that a different sort of shooting would be required and at the shorter ranges more customary in European terrain. Because of colonial commitments the Infantry had not greatly practised such musketry hitherto and, when need for it had arisen against the Boers, expertise had been lacking. The 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War, too, had thrown up important tactical lessons, not least the effectiveness of machine-guns.

All this was grasped at the Hythe School of Musketry. A new range course was devised for different kinds of shooting up to 600yds. against fixed and moving targets, and for field firing under conditions as near to actual war as safety would permit, with emphasis on individual skill rather than the collective effect of volleys. To contend with German numerical superiority the Chief Instructor, Lt. Col. McMahon, recommended six machine-guns per battalion instead of the authorised two; however, since this was not accepted, he concentrated on speeding up the rifleman's rate of fire. The result was the 'mad minute', the rapid practice in the range course of 15 aimed shots per minute into a 2ft. circle at 300 yards. The formula for success was a stable firing position, firm grip, speed in taking aim, and rapid reloading facilitated by charger loading[17] and a slick bolt-action, all of which could be achieved by constant, even repetitious practice, within barracks with drill rounds and wall-painted targets and eye-discs, as much as on the rifle range. The thoroughness of McMahon's methods was proved in 1914, both by many, quite erroneous, German accounts of decimating British machine-gun fire, and by how

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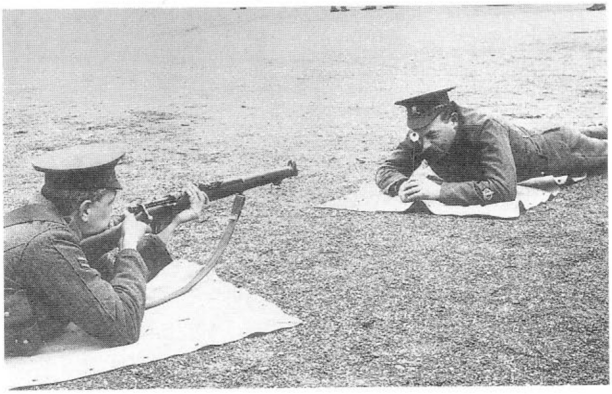
[16] See Men-at-Arms 201.

[17] Five rounds in a clip, rather than individual loading.



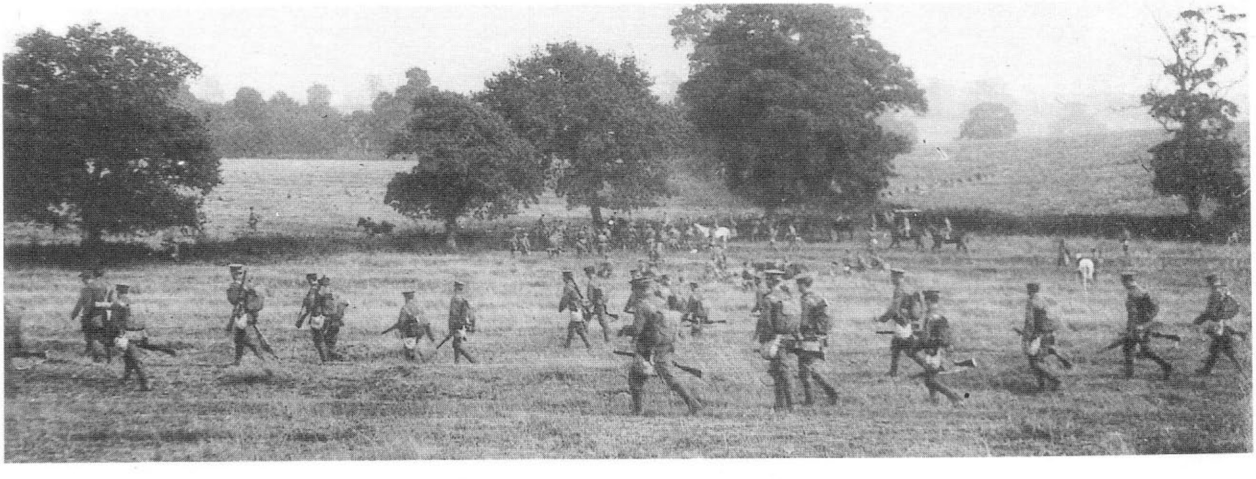
Musketry training: use of the eye disc at the School of Musketry, Hythe, to teach consistency and rapidity of aiming. (IWM)

quickly the lessons once learned were remembered by Reservists. Frank Richards, who had gone on the Reserve in 1909, could get off 25 aimed shots per minute, while some could manage 30; he recorded that 'to good, trained pre-war soldiers who kept their nerve, ten men holding a trench could easily stop fifty who were trying to take it advancing from a distance of four hundred yards'[18].

In conjunction with improved musketry, training was devoted to use of cover, open order and covering movement with fire, all requiring greater initiative from the lowest ranks than before. By the Army Manoeuvres of 1913 a French observer could report how the British Infantry 'makes wonderful use of ground, advances as a rule by short rushes and always at the double, and almost invariably fires from a lying position'[19]. McMahon saw for himself the success of his Hythe teaching in the casualties inflicted by his own battalion, 4/Royal Fusiliers, with much less loss to themselves at the Battle of Mons.

The Infantry's pre-war marksmanship was eventually attained by the Cavalry, though they were late starters owing to the major training controversy affecting that Arm after the Boer War. Essentially this was between those, like Lord Roberts, who believed that the cavalryman should become primarily a mounted rifleman yet keeping his sword for the occasional opportunity of shock action, and others, like the influential cavalry generals French and Haig, who claimed South Africa had been abnormal and that, since European armies still mustered large, old-style cavalry forces, the British Cavalry's chief rôle must remain shock action with the '*arme blanche*' against such mounted opponents. Over the years the latter school gained ground, if somewhat modifying their views. Even so, as late as 1910, 80 per cent of cavalry training was devoted to shock tactics and only 10 per cent each to fire tactics and reconnaissance. However, when these proportions, and the indifferent musketry returns resulting from them, came to the notice of senior infantry generals like Smith-Dorrien with cavalry under his command, and Douglas, Inspector-General of the Forces (1912–14), cavalry colonels were ordered to mend their ways. French was displeased but Smith-Dorrien recorded 'the cavalry went nearly to the head of the lists in Annual Musketry'. The

Army Manoeuvres, 1913: infantry sections advancing in open order. The corporal commanding the rearmost section is in the centre and slightly ahead of his men. (NAM)



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[18] *Old Soldiers Never Die.* French and German authorised rapid rates were 12 rounds per minute.

[19] Quoted E. M. Spiers, *Reforming the Infantry, 1900–14* (JSAHR LIX).

Cavalrymen learning to shoot. Royal Scots Greys supervised by an officer. Note the universal firing position in this and the following illustration. (*Illustrated London News*)

controversy was never settled one way or the other, and ended in a compromise between shock and dismounted action.

Having for generations considered themselves superior to the Infantry, the Cavalry found it difficult to accept that modern battles were fought and won by infantry, covered by artillery, with themselves only in a supportive rôle: countering enemy cavalry, screening and informing the infantry before, and co-operating with it during battle, and eventually exploiting its success by pursuit and cutting lines of retreat. It was much to the Cavalry's credit that when the test came, notwithstanding the time wasted in peacetime on shock tactics, they proved they could screen and inform, and in the darkest days of First Ypres, when every rifle counted, that they were 'at least ten, if not fifteen years ahead of any continental cavalry in rifle shooting, fire discipline and knowledge of when and where to resort to fire tactics'[20].

Tactics continued to be based on the late 19th century three-tier formation of firing line, supports and reserves[21], but modified to suit the infantry's new 'four-square' organisation and enhanced by the improved musketry, field-craft, and combining fire and movement. The attack—which was much practised being considered the decisive operation of war—would go forward in extended order until the leading troops came under fire. By utilising any suitable cover and with rifle, machine-gun and artillery covering fire preventing the enemy inflicting casualties, the firing line would push forward by rushes until it reached assaulting distance (100–200 yards). Supports would advance to replace casualties and thicken up the firing line until fire superiority was achieved. Then the assault would go in. The reserves meanwhile would have been ready to guard the flanks, give additional fire support, and assist or exploit the final assault. Within a battalion two platoons each of the leading companies might form the initial firing line, their other two platoons its supports, and one or two companies the reserves. The artillery's prime task was no longer the duel with the enemy guns, but to assist the movements of its own infantry and prevent those of the enemy infantry. Its new ability to fire indirect and overhead, controlled by observers with the infantry, greatly increased its covering fire's effectiveness and duration.

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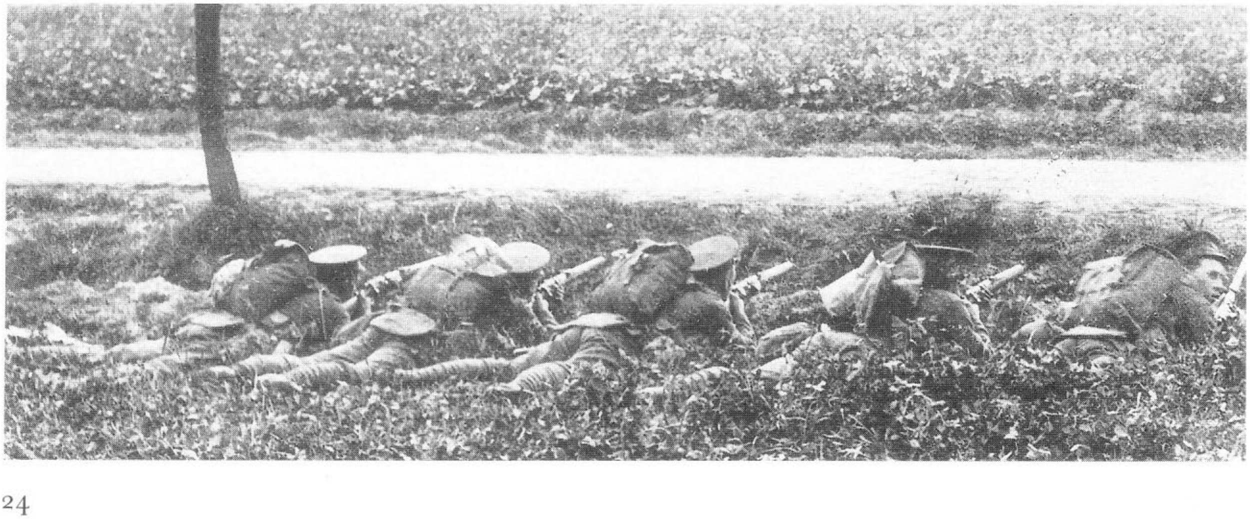
[20] Maj. Gen. Rimington, *Our Cavalry* (1912). See Marquess of Anglesey, *History of the British Cavalry* Vol. IV (1986), pp. 388–423.

[21] See Men-at-Arms 198, p. 13; MAA 201, p. 9.

Putting training into practice: infantry firing line, 'one rifle per yard of front', about to engage the Germans. (IWM)



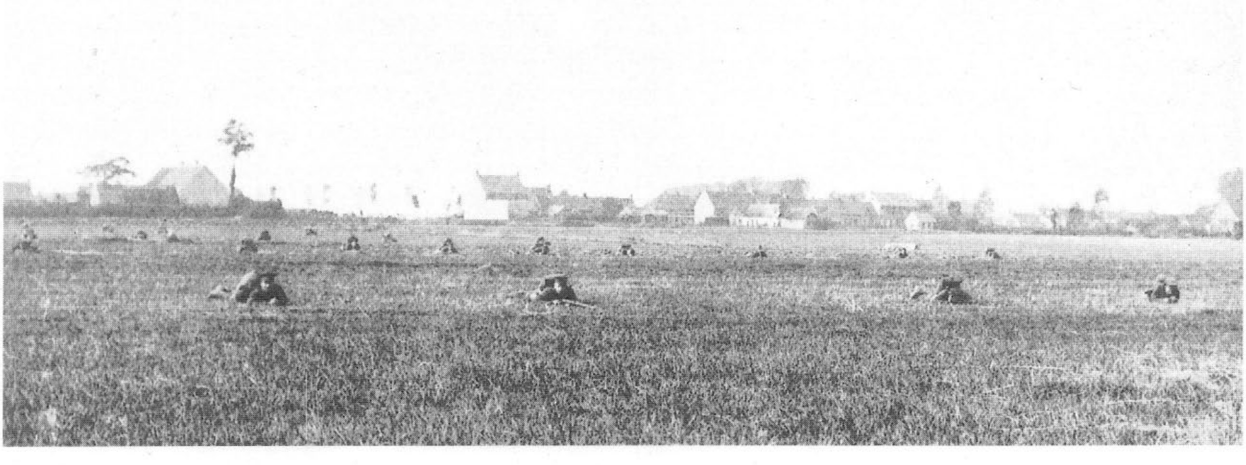
How this appeared to an enemy was described by Hauptmann Bloem, who watched a three-battalion attack against a neighbouring formation on the Aisne[22]: 'Across a belt of meadow stretched what seemed to be a dotted line of widely separated strokes. With field glasses we could see these were advancing infantry. From the bushes bordering the river sprang up a second line with at least ten paces interval from man to man. Our artillery flashed and hit—naturally, at most, one man. The second line held on and pushed always nearer. Two hundred yards behind it came a third wave, a fourth. Our artillery fired like mad; all in vain, a fifth, a sixth line came on, all with good distance and clear intervals between the men. Now infantry fire met the attackers but wave after wave flooded forward and disappeared from our view'.

In defence the essentials were good fields of fire, depth and mutual support, with trenches sited away from obvious targets and concealed. Trench digging was practised on manoeuvres, but because they had to be filled in afterwards, plus the emphasis on attack, perhaps not as assiduously as it should have been. Once in action the BEF learned from necessity but, due to lack of time and materials, the 1914 trenches were little more than improved ditches without the refinements of later years. The yardstick on frontages was that the firing line and supports required one rifle per yard of front. The reserves' tasks were to reinforce the firing line, guard the flanks, counter-attack and patrol by night in gaps covered by day with fire. Fields of fire of riflemen and machine-guns around defended localities were tied in with artillery tasks so that all likely approaches would be subject to combined fire. Artillery fire would aim to force early deployment on enemy infantry, thereafter making their advance as costly as possible, while neutralising the enemy guns' efforts to assist their infantry, and ultimately supporting counter-attacks.

Within a battalion the ideal deployment was, again, two companies forward finding their own supports and two in reserve, but such were the frontages that sometimes had to be held in action, especially when the terrain offered restricted fields of fire, as at Mons, that it could be necessary to have three companies forward, even all four, with a reserve of only one or two platoons. There would be occasions at First Ypres when, due to heavy casualties and overwhelming enemy strength, the only reserves were transport drivers, cooks and batmen, sappers or rifle-armed gunners from non-effective batteries; all, however, had learned to shoot.

Also practised in peacetime was the withdrawal. Its principles were familiar to many from service on the North-West Frontier. As ever, fire was essential to cover movement, which was by leapfrogging back by bounds along covered routes wherever possible, through firmly held positions with good fields of fire, until a clean break with the pursuing enemy could be made. Machine-guns, with their long range and sustained fire, played a vital rôle and might have to be sacrificed to get rearmost troops away, while artillery observers were essential

2/Scots Guards extended in open order waiting to advance near Gheluvelt, October 1914. Compare intervals with those in 1913 manoeuvres photograph on p. 23. (IWM)



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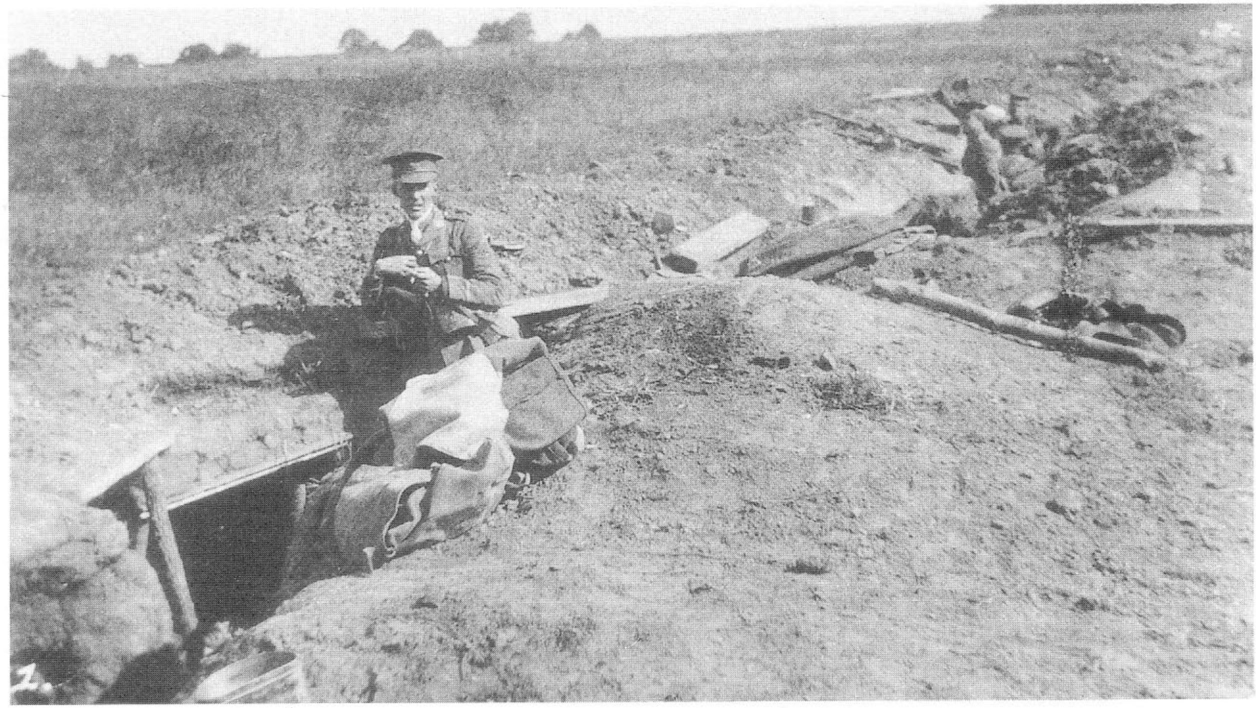
[22] By 12 Brigade: 1/King's Own, 2/Lancashire Fusiliers, 2/Essex. Quoted *Official History*, I, p. 383.



Type of shallow front-line trench at the beginnings of trench warfare on the Aisne, 22 September 1914, manned by 1/King's Own, 4th Division. Note rudimentary parapet and dug-out entrance left of the officer. (Cameronians Museum)

to bring down gunfire to assist embattled rearguards to disengage. The proficiency acquired in peacetime at this most difficult manoeuvre was to pay dividends at Mons and Le Cateau, though the uncertainty of communications was to result more than once in units never receiving the order to retire and fighting on until too late. Even so the occasional sacrifices of the few were seldom in vain, since their steadfastness ensured the greater number could fight again.

Summary

Notwithstanding the superiority of its tactical training to other armies, the BEF was not without defects. Although the British divisions, of both types, were larger than their German equivalents, there were far fewer of them. Before Mons, for example, the Cavalry Division and the two Corps (four divisions) faced three German cavalry divisions and six corps (12 divisions), while during the battle 3rd and 5th Divisions were engaged with six German divisions.

The post-Boer War reforms had been effected over a relatively short period; and in a traditionally conservative Army, much of it overseas where more immediate priorities than a European war prevailed, not all had been fully grasped or accepted. There were no official pronouncements on Germany being the threat and no study of the German Army and its methods was officially permitted. Despite the pre-war establishment of brigades and divisions, the Imperial garrisons remained the first priority and the foreign service roster was maintained, so that commanding and regimental officers tended to think of their most likely active service being in the traditional theatres of Asia and Africa, continuity of units within home formations was not assured, and home battalions annually lost men on draft to their overseas counterparts[23].

Compared with the Germans there were serious deficiencies in heavy guns, HE shells, mortars and hand grenades, and the tactical employment of machine-guns was less advanced. Questions of cost inevitably inhibited provision of equipment as well as the assembly of higher formations for training and use of land for manoeuvres.

Nevertheless there is no doubt that in the pre-war decade, within political and financial limitations, the authorities, from Haldane and the General Staff in the War Office down to the squadron, company and battery officers and NCOs, produced a well-equipped, highly trained, superbly disciplined and—perhaps most important of all—self-confident fighting force whose military competence, from the individual upwards, was higher than anything achieved in the Army before. Of its sterling qualities, perhaps the testimonials of its enemies—no mean soldiers themselves—are the most objective and indisputable. Hauptmann Bloem thought the attack described above was 'splendid, we are all filled with admiration'. Gen. von Zwehl considered the BEF's men 'very exceptional soldiers'[24], while Gen. Oberst von Kluck, who had more cause than most to know, pronounced the BEF to be 'the finest of its kind that ever took the field in Europe'[25].

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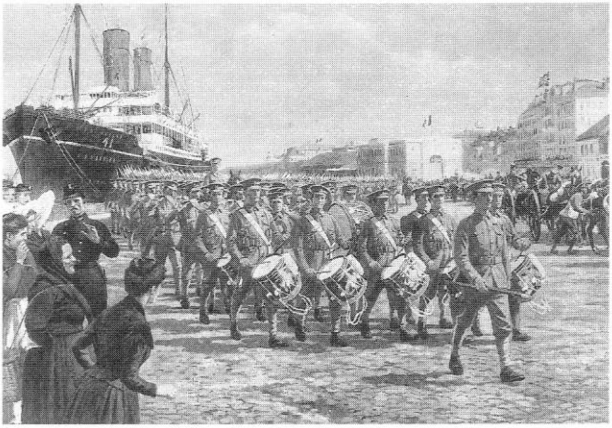
[23] e.g., in 1910 2/Northamptons left 3rd Division for Malta, 1/Northamptons returning from India into 3rd, later 1st Division. 2/Worcesters only returned from India into 2nd Division in 1913 after 17 years abroad. The 15th Hussars, I Corps divisional cavalry, returned from South Africa in 1913 after 14 years abroad.

The BEF in Action

In a work of this scope there is insufficient space to record in detail the outstanding performance of the small but highly efficient BEF in the first three months of the Great War against the most powerful military machine in Europe. One 'Old Contemptible' had no doubt that the BEF's '"thin khaki line" really won the war, as, if it had not held before Ypres in November 1914, nothing could have stopped the Germans from getting to the Channel ports and the war would have been over and won by Germany before Christmas'[26]. Whether the loss of the Channel ports would have won Germany the war is arguable but certainly their loss would have laid Britain open to invasion.

In making its great stand the pre-war Regular Army almost ceased to exist; but its achievement set an example for the volunteers and conscripts who followed to emulate, and ultimately to vindicate the BEF's sacrifice with final victory in 1918. The full story can be found in other works, some of which are listed later. Here only an outline of the BEF's operations can be given, together with a few examples to illustrate the quality of the 1914 Regulars and their regiments.



The BEF's landing at Boulogne: an infantry battalion marches off headed by its drums and fifes. (W. B. Wollen; NAM)

Outline of Events

Brigades, Divisions, Corps are abbreviated thus:

Infantry brigade = B (e.g. 1B)
Cavalry brigade = CavB (e.g. 2CavB)
Division = D (e.g. 3rdD)
Cavalry division = CavD (e.g. 1stCavD)
Corps = C (e.g. IIC, CavC)
Indian Corps = IndC

Battalions = 1/, 4/ (e.g. 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment = 1/Middlesex.)
Battle Honours subsequently awarded are printed in small capitals, e.g. AISNE.

August

4	General mobilisation ordered. War declared on Germany.
12–17	BEF(IC: 1st, 2ndDs; IIC: 3rd, 5thDs; CavD) land in France.
20	BEF concentrated around Maubeuge, Le Cateau on left of French Fifth Army.
21	Advances to Mons. CavD forward, IC right, IIC left.
22	First cavalry contacts with German First Army (seven corps of fourteen divisions). 4thD arrives France.
23	Battle of MONS. IIC attacked by three German corps. BEF casualties: 4,352.
24	RETREAT FROM MONS begins. Action at Elouges to guard left flank of 5thD (2CavB, 3CavB, 15B).
25	4thD arrives on left of IIC. Action at Landrecies (4(Gds)B of 2ndD, IC).
26	Battle of LE CATEAU. IIC, 4thD, CavD, 19B attacked by three German corps and

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[24] Quoted D. Ascoli, *The Mons Star* (1981) p. 4.
[25] Quoted H. Williamson, *How Dear Is Life* (1954), p. 223.
[26] E. J. Needham, *The First Three Months* (1936).

16th Lancers, 3 Cavalry Brigade, on the march in France. (IWM)

one cavalry corps. BEF casualties: 7,812.

27 Rearguard action at Etreux by 2/R Munster Fus. (1(Gds)B, 1stD, IC).

29 French Fifth Army fights Battle of Guise on BEF's right.

30 German First Army alters march from south-west to south-east across front of Paris.

31 IIIC formed of 4thD and 19B.

September

1 Action at Néry (1CavB, CavD).
Rearguard actions at Crépy (13B, 5thD, IIC) and Villers Cotteret (4(Gds)B, 2ndD, IC).

3–5 French prepare counter-offensive against German right wing. German First Army ordered to halt facing Paris.

5 BEF ends retreat, halts SSE of Paris.

6–9 Battle of the MARNE. BEF advances between French Fifth and Sixth Armies. German right wing begins withdrawing. BEF casualties: 1,700.

9 Germans retreat behind the Aisne.

10–12 Allies pursue.

13–15 Battle of the AISNE. IC and IIC attack. Casualties: 13,541.

14 IC and 3rdD of IIC attack Chemin des Dames against three German corps and a cavalry division.

16 Germans stabilise position. BEF entrenches on line reached. First trench warfare. 6thD joins BEF, split between I, II and IIICs. Cavalry reorganised into 1stCavD (1, 2, 4CavBs) and 2ndCavD (3, 5CavBs) forming CavC.

17–26 Germans counter-attack on the Aisne.

27 All offensive operations on Aisne cease. Allies and Germans begin extending flanks north-westwards towards Channel.

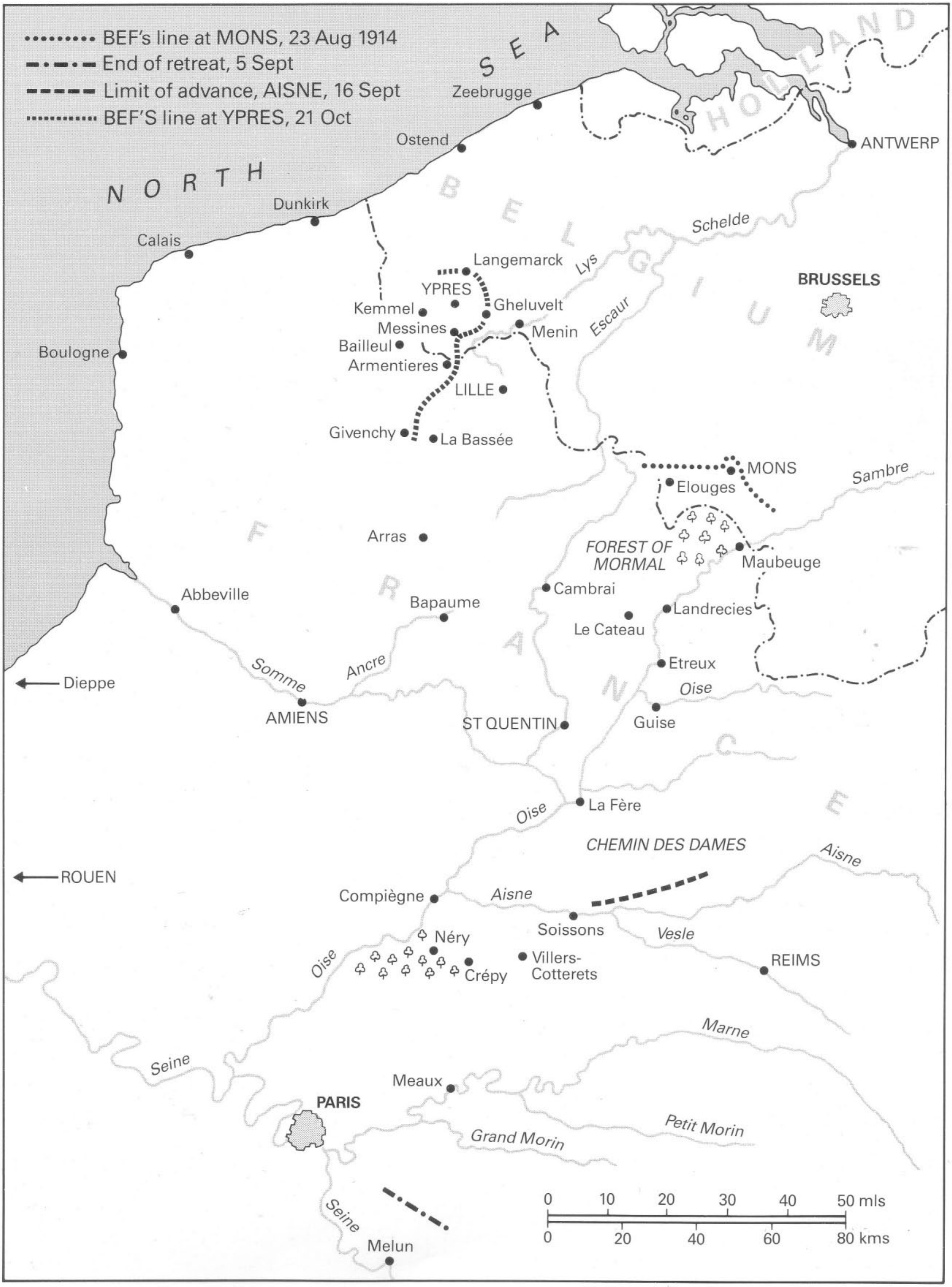
October

1–2 BEF begins withdrawing from Aisne and moving to Flanders to resume former position on left of French armies. 6thD joins IIIC.

4 Royal Naval Division arrives Antwerp.

6–7 7thD and 3rdCavD from England arrive Zeebrugge; cover withdrawal of Belgian Army from Antwerp; join BEF as IVC.

8–21 BEF arrives in succession of corps from Aisne to fill gap between French left and Belgians on coast. Deploys, from south: IIC La Bassée; IIIC Bailleul-Armentières; CavC Messines; IVC covering Ypres; IC north of Ypres.
Opposing BEF: south, German Sixth Army (four corps); north, German Fourth Army (four corps); plus four cavalry corps and six divisions. German objective: Calais.

BEF's line at MONS, 23 Aug 1914
End of retreat, 5 Sept
Limit of advance, AISNE, 16 Sept
BEF'S line at YPRES, 21 Oct
NORTH SEA
HOLLAND
BELGIUM
FRANCE
Zeebrugge
Ostend
Dunkirk
Calais
Boulogne
ANTWERP
Schelde
Lys
Escaut
BRUSSELS
Langemarck
YPRES
Gheluvelt
Kemmel
Messines
Menin
Bailleul
Armentieres
LILLE
Givenchy
La Bassée
MONS
Elouges
Sambre
FOREST OF MORMAL
Maubeuge
Arras
Cambrai
Abbeville
Bapaume
Landrecies
Le Cateau
Etreux
Oise
Somme
Ancre
Dieppe
AMIENS
ST QUENTIN
Guise
La Fère
Oise
CHEMIN DES DAMES
Aisne
ROUEN
Compiègne
Aisne
Soissons
Vesle
Néry
Villers-Cotterets
Crépy
REIMS
Oise
Marne
Seine
Meaux
PARIS
Petit Morin
Grand Morin
Seine
Melun
0 10 20 30 40 50 mls
0 20 40 60 80 kms

10 Oct–11 Nov Battle of First YPRES (including LA BASSÉE, 10 Oct–2 Nov, ARMENTIÉRES, 13 Oct–2 Nov, MESSINES, 12 Oct–2 Nov, LANGEMARCK, 21–24 Oct, GHELUVELT, 29–31 Oct, NONNE BOSCHEN, 11 Nov).

10 IIC advances towards Lille.

16–19 IIIC, IVC and CavC advance east.

20–30 German Sixth Army begins counter-attacks against IIC, IIIC, CavC.

21–24 German Fourth Army counter-attacks against IVC and IC.

23 IndC (Lahore and Meerut Ds) begins arriving.

27 IVC broken up: 7thD to IC, 3rdCavD to CavC.

29 Fresh German offensive (four corps, three cavalry corps) between Messines and Gheluvelt against Ypres. Falls mainly on IC and part CavC.

29–30 IndC relieves IIC at La Bassée.

30 German attack on Messines continues.

31 German attack on Gheluvelt continues—village lost—recaptured by 2/Worcesters (5B, 2ndD, IC).

November

2 Major German attacks abate but probes continue.

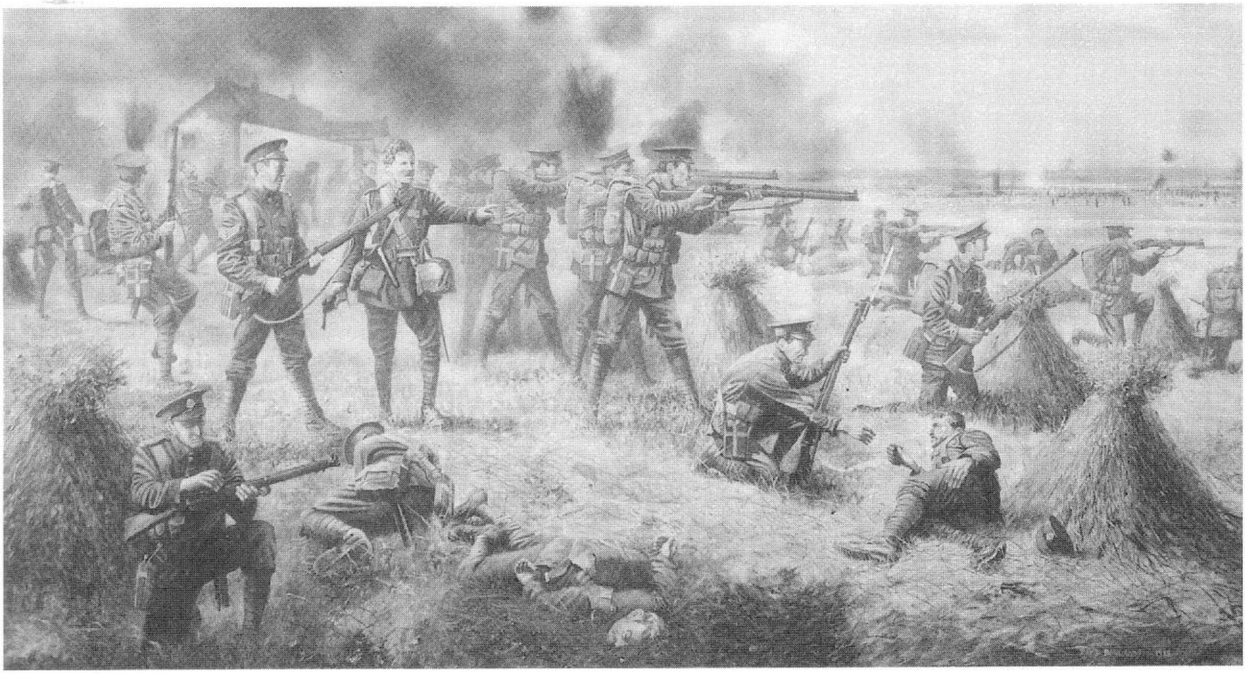
5 Part of IIC relieves 7thD (80% casualties).

11 Germans renew attack at Gheluvelt with Prussian Guard supported by two more corps against 1st, 2nd and 3rdDs. Finally repulsed at Nonne Boschen. End of First Ypres. BEF casualties: 58,155.

15–22 French troops take over Ypres Salient.

22 BEF take over 20-mile front between Givenchy-Kemmel. 8thD joins BEF. Trench warfare for rest of year.

Strength original BEF(Aug) (excluding L of C, Army Troops, first reinforcements[27])	87,416
4th, 6th, 7th, 3rdCavDs (Aug–Oct) (excluding first reinforcements)	58,853
IndC(Nov)	approx. 37,000
TF units(13) (Nov)	approx. 11,000
Total Losses, 23 Aug–30 Nov	89,864



First day of the retreat from Mons. The last stand of Capt. Dyer and 'A' Company, 1/Cheshire of 15 Brigade at Audregnies, 4 pm, 24 August. Not having received the order to retire, the battalion was cut off. (David Rowlands: courtesy of the artist)

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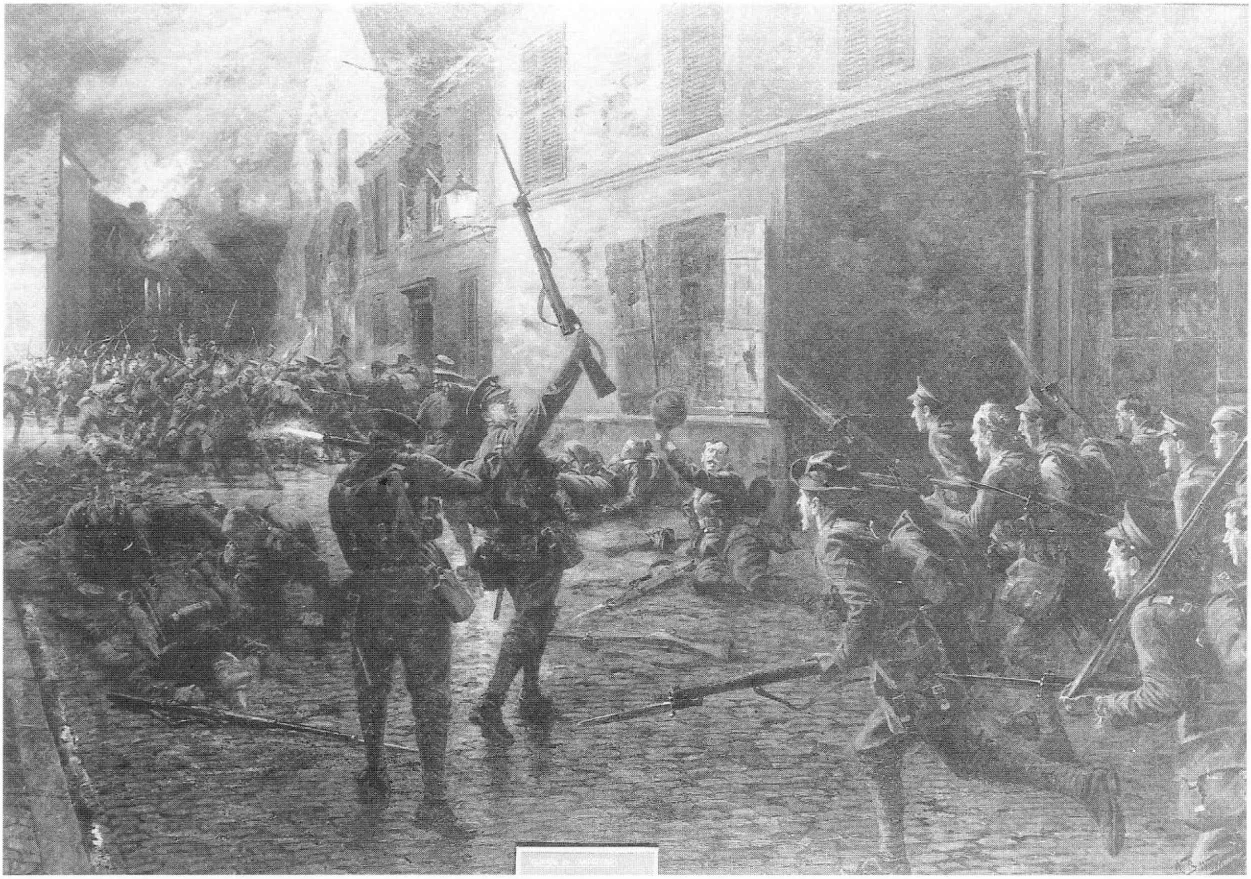
[27] All Regular units received their first-line reinforcements (10 per cent of original strength) by 6 September. By mid-September most Regular Reservist reinforcements had been used up and thereafter all unit reinforcements were mainly Special Reservists.



The night action at Landrecies, 25 August, by 4 (Guards) Brigade, 2nd Division: 2/Grenadiers, 2/ and 3/Coldstream, 1/Irish Guards. (W. B. Wollen; NAM)

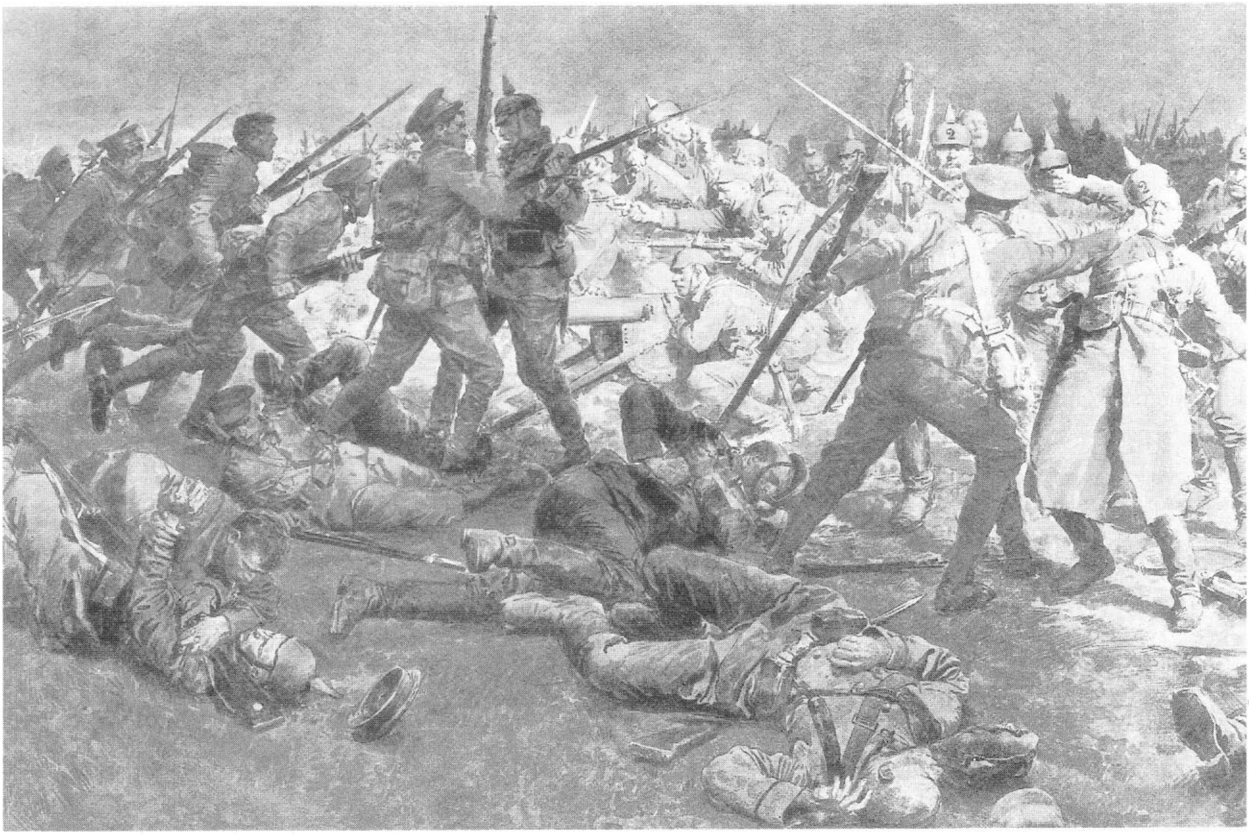
The Mons Salient

When II Corps took up defensive positions at Mons on 23 August, two of the only three Regular 4th Battalions among the County Regiments would be foremost in the battle, located as they were in the canal salient looping round Mons itself: 4/Royal Fusiliers of 9 Brigade facing the Ghlin and Nimy bridges and, on its right, 4/Middlesex of 8 Brigade holding an outpost line from the apex of the salient to the Bois de l'Haut to the south-east. There were thus a total of eight companies and four machine-guns to hold three and a half miles against the German IX Corps' 18th Division of 12 battalions (48 companies), 72 guns and 24 machine-guns.

At 6 am both battalions exchanged shots with German cavalry patrols, 4/RF taking two officers prisoner. Matters began in earnest before 9 am when heavy German shellfire fell on both battalions. A German battery unwisely unlimbering in the open was quickly dispersed by 4/Middlesex's machine-guns. Close to Obourg a Middlesex company in shallow trenches watched the fir trees across the canal for the German infantry. Between 9 and 10 am they came on, in close formation. The Middlesex opened rapid fire at 500 yards; Pte. Bradley recalled 'they went down like ninepins. You could hear a strange wailing sound and they ran for the fir trees'[28]. As the enemy attack spread westwards 4/RF made good shooting against similar targets massing at the bridges. The German infantry, reeling from the rapid rifle fire unknown to and unattainable by European conscript armies, soon changed its formations to a more extended order. Even so, and despite the enemy preponderance in numbers and guns, both battalions had little difficulty holding their positions until noon.

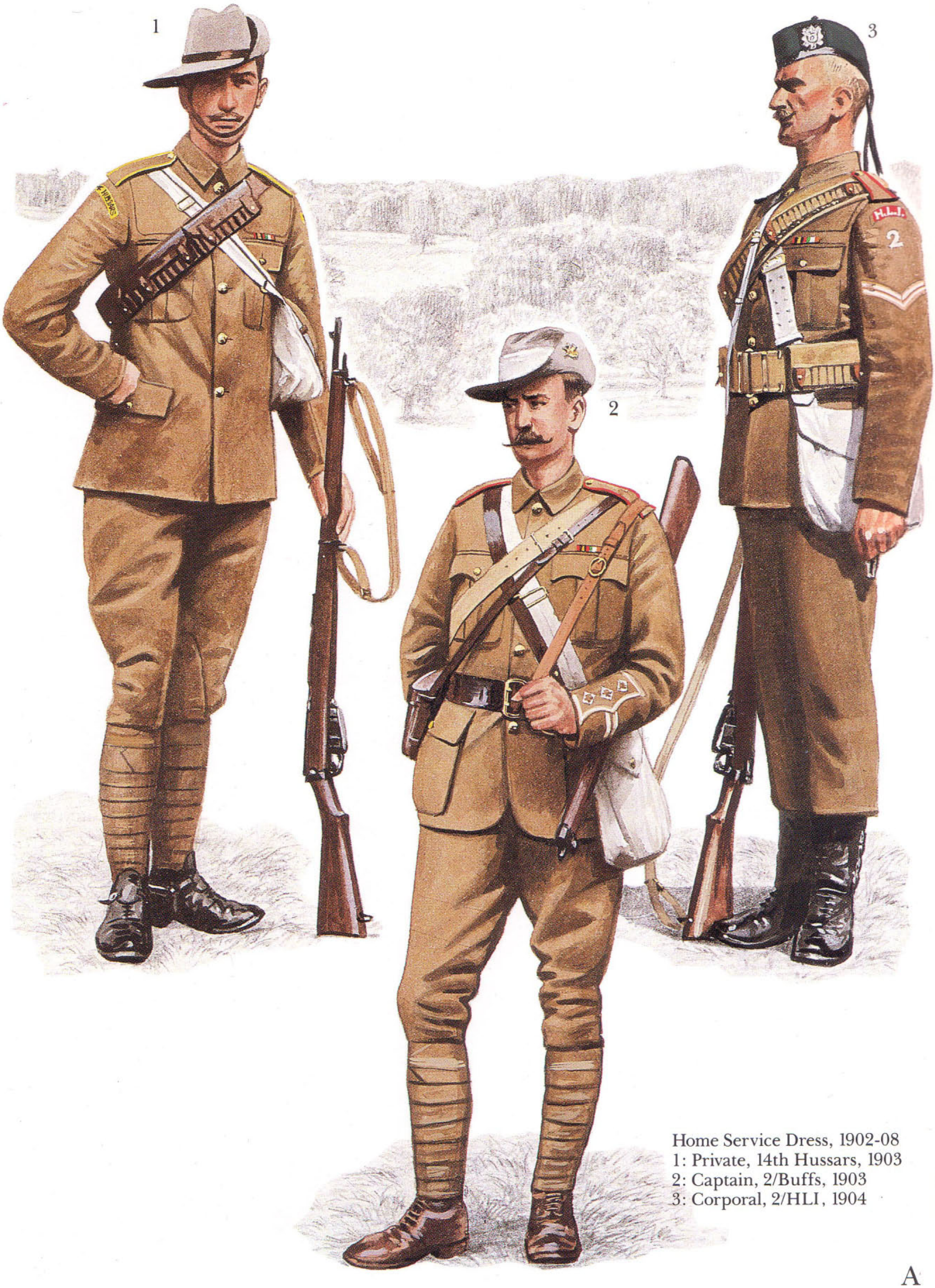
Thereafter, as the German artillery on the north bank's higher ground increasingly pinpointed the British positions the better to cover their infantry forward, 4/Middlesex had to fall back from its extended line to the close support of 2/Royal Irish.

[28] Quoted Ascoli p. 63.



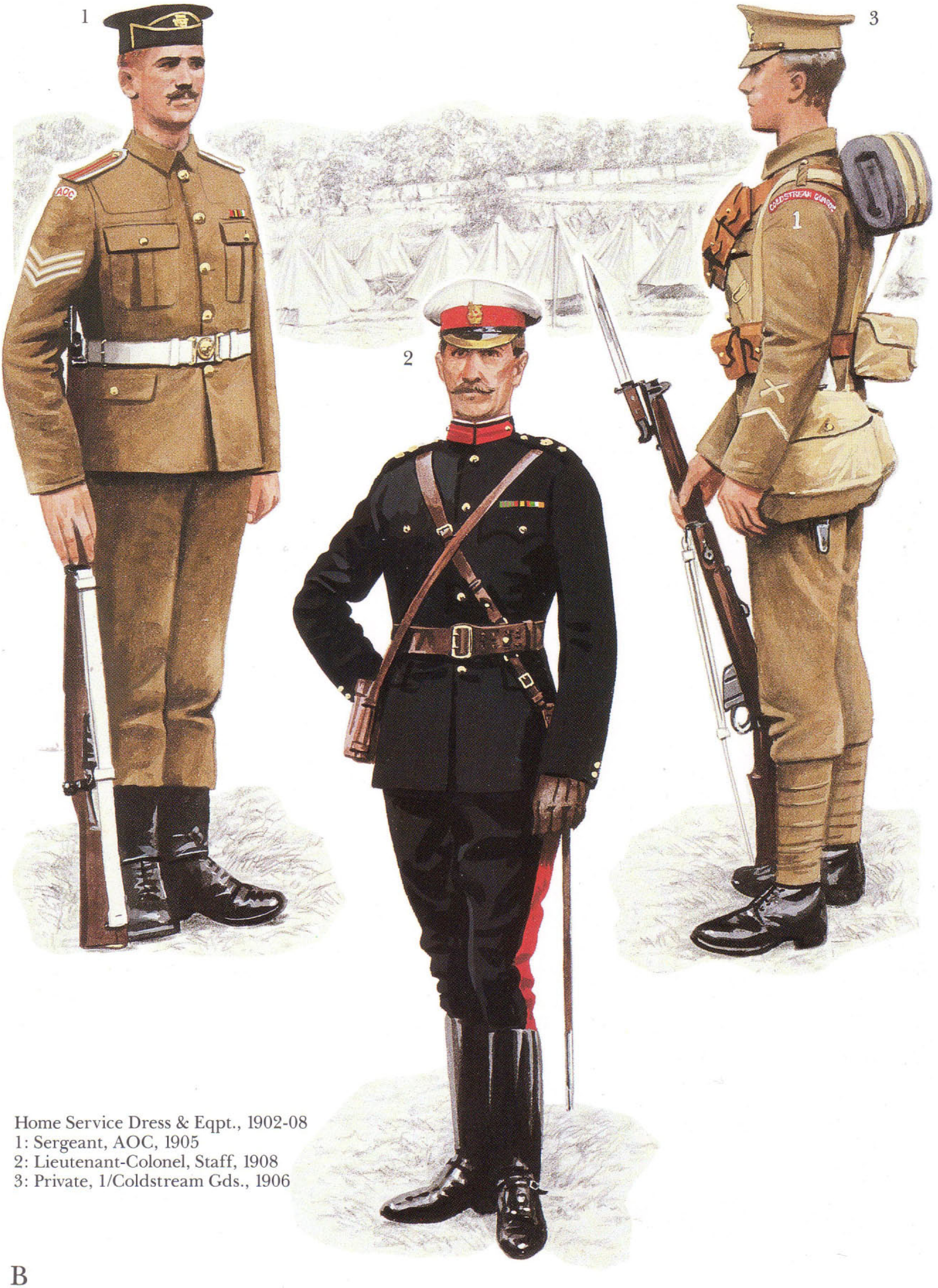
(*Above*) **Infantry hand-to-hand with Germans at First Ypres. (F. Matania; NAM)**

(*Below*) **4th Dragoon Guards, the first regiment in contact with the Germans on 22 August, manning an outpost at Mons before the infantry arrived to take over. (IWM)**



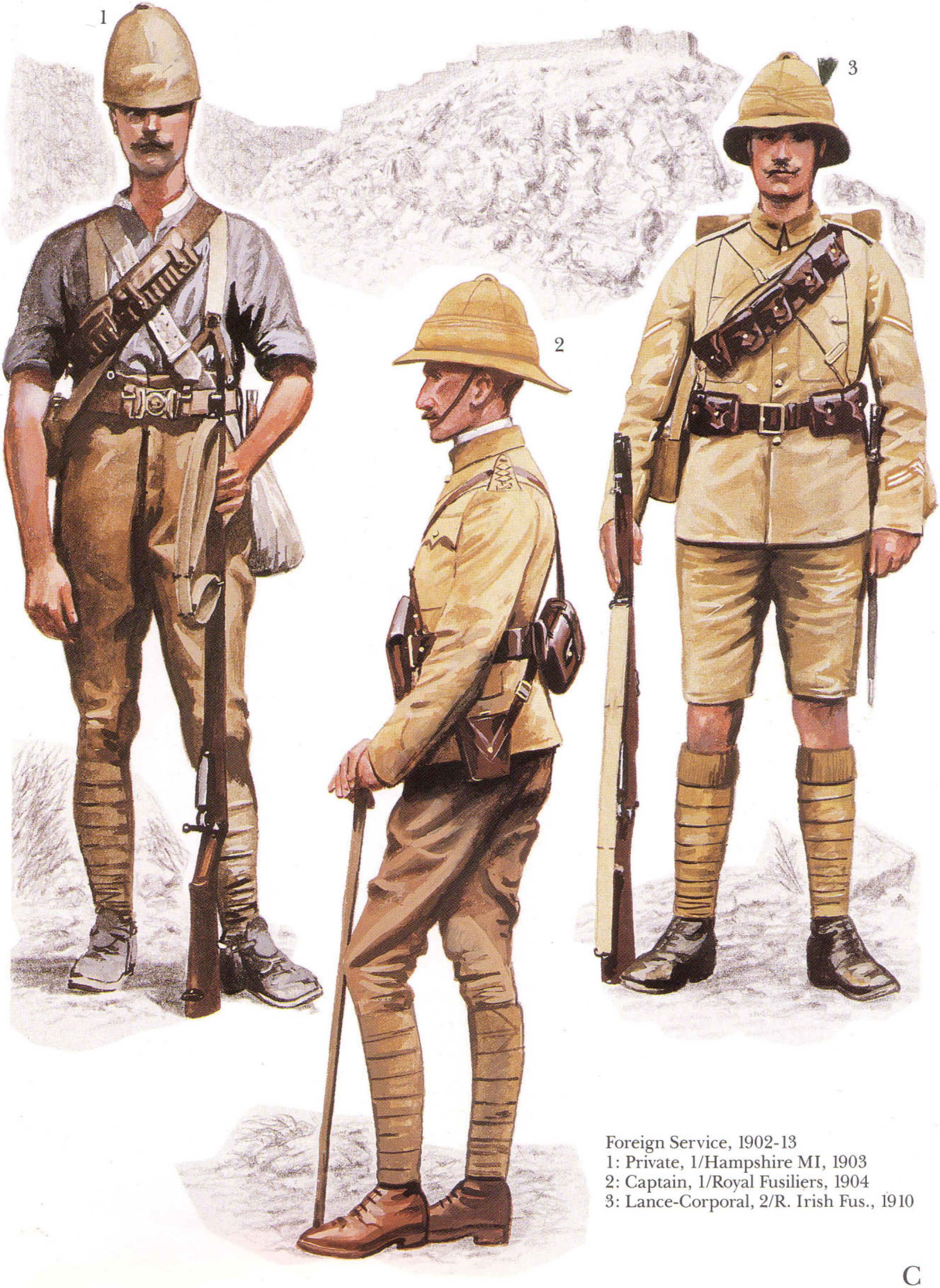
Home Service Dress, 1902-08
1: Private, 14th Hussars, 1903
2: Captain, 2/Buffs, 1903
3: Corporal, 2/HLI, 1904

A

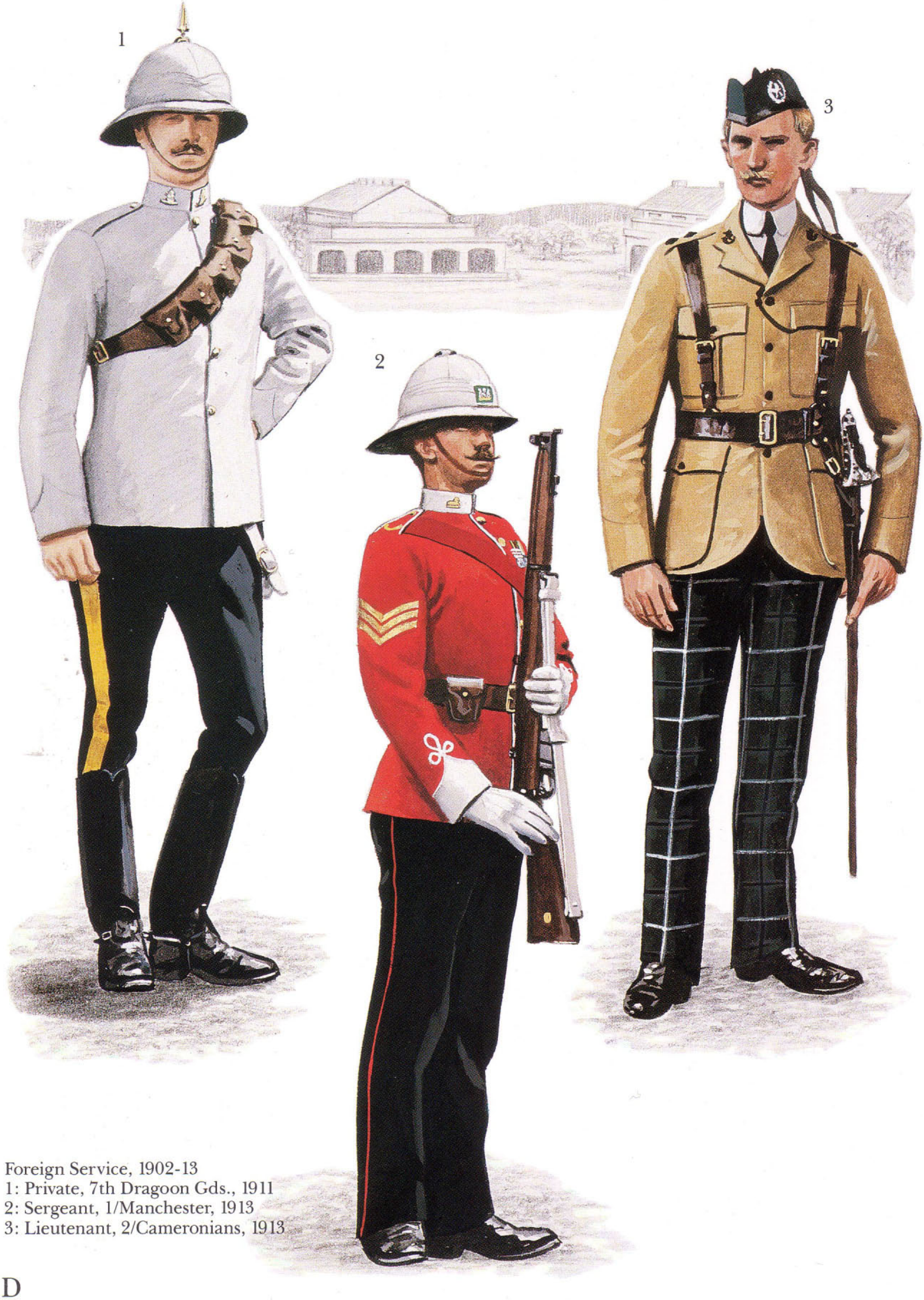

1
2
3
AOC
COLDSTREAM GUARDS
1

Home Service Dress & Eqpt., 1902-08
1: Sergeant, AOC, 1905
2: Lieutenant-Colonel, Staff, 1908
3: Private, 1/Coldstream Gds., 1906

B

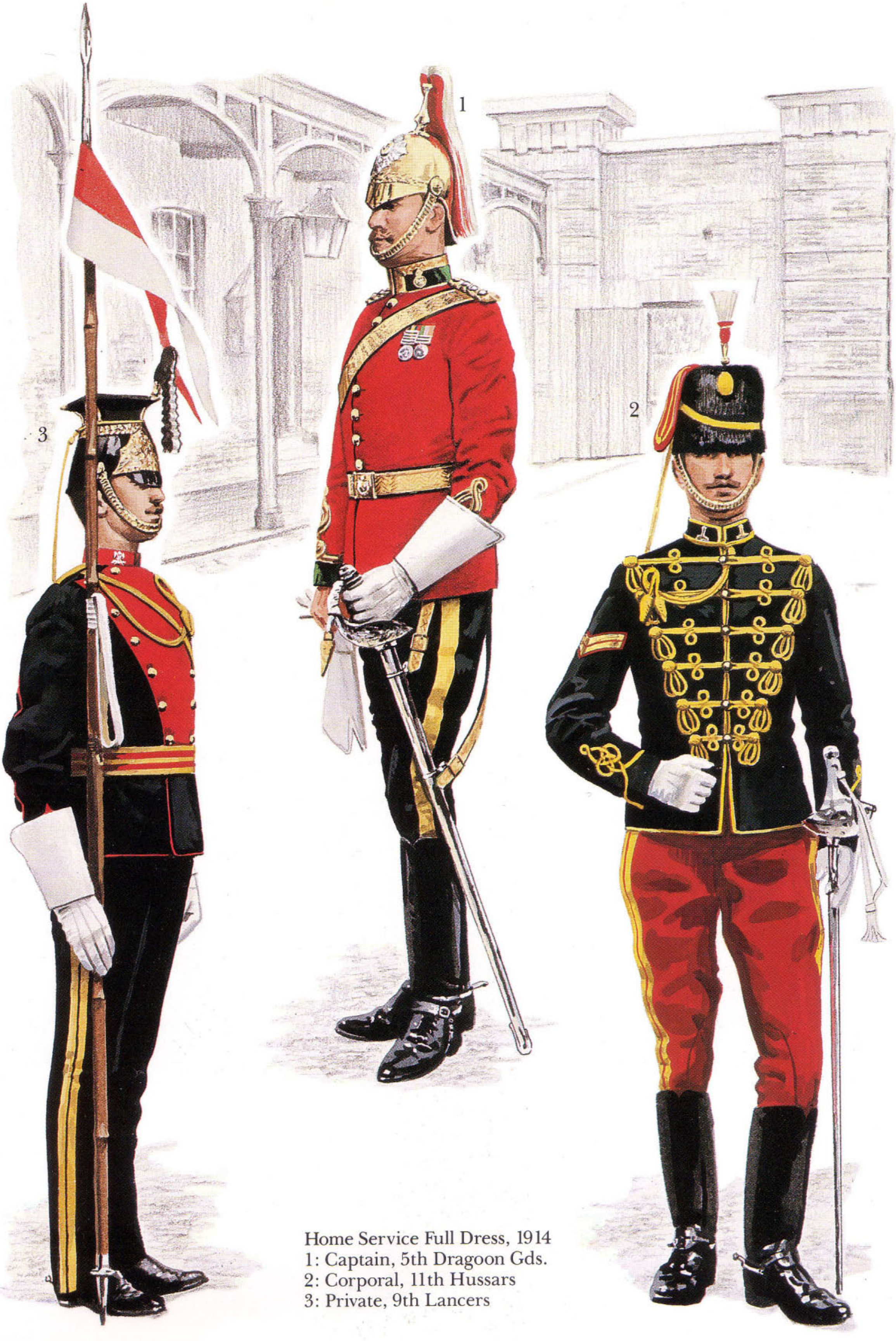


Foreign Service, 1902-13
1: Private, 1/Hampshire MI, 1903
2: Captain, 1/Royal Fusiliers, 1904
3: Lance-Corporal, 2/R. Irish Fus., 1910



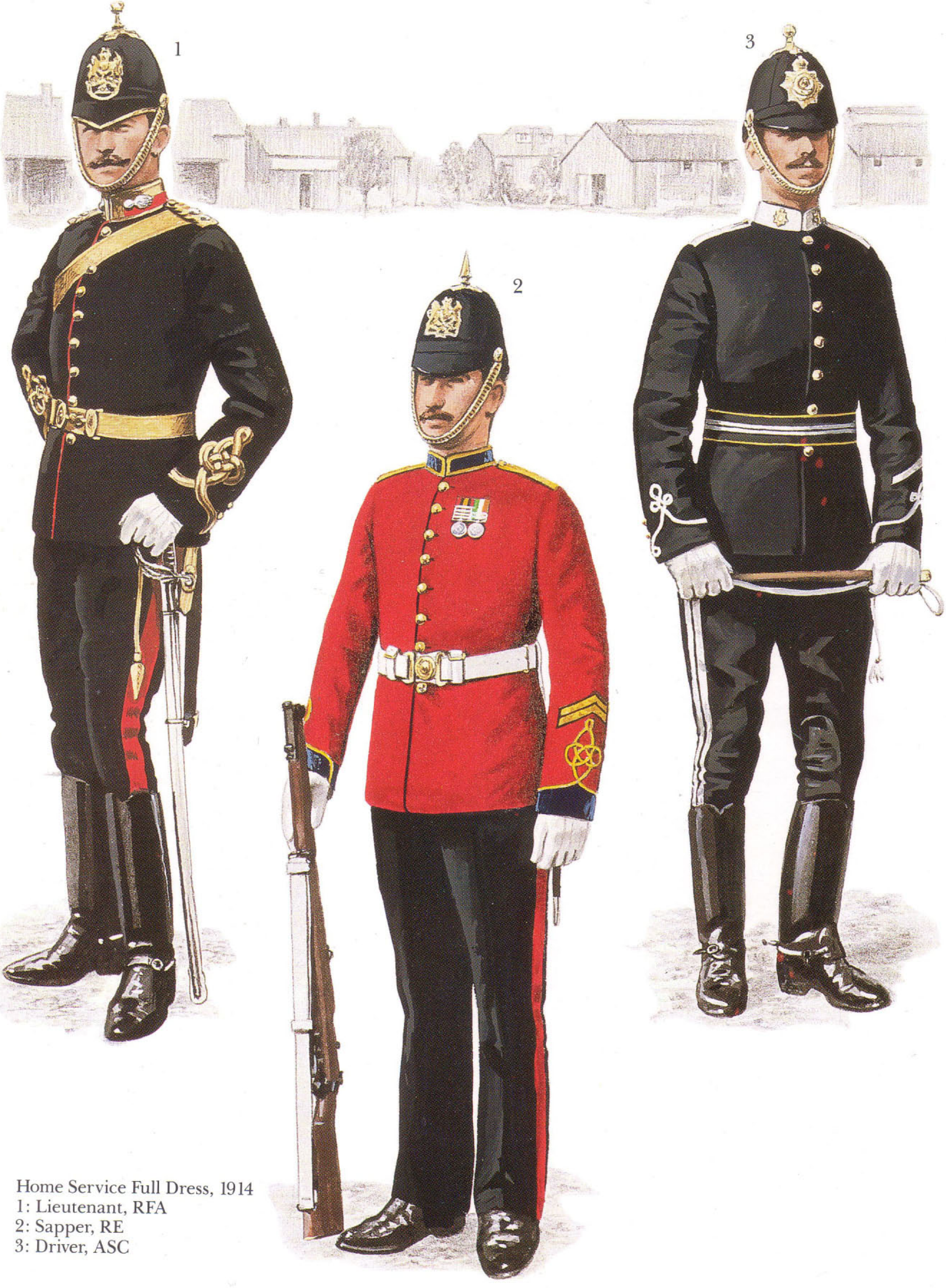
Foreign Service, 1902-13
1: Private, 7th Dragoon Gds., 1911
2: Sergeant, 1/Manchester, 1913
3: Lieutenant, 2/Cameronians, 1913

D



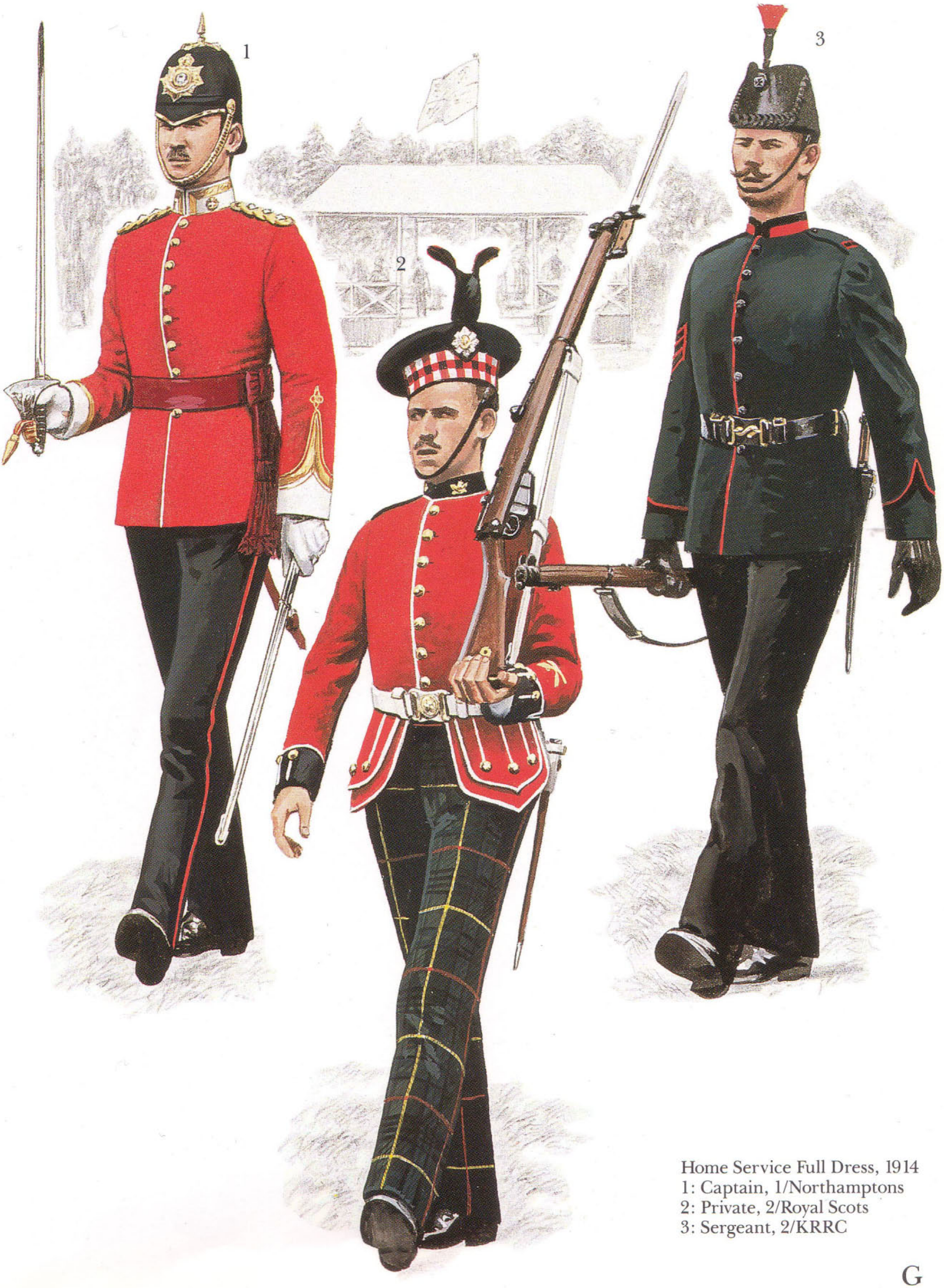
Home Service Full Dress, 1914
1: Captain, 5th Dragoon Gds.
2: Corporal, 11th Hussars
3: Private, 9th Lancers

E



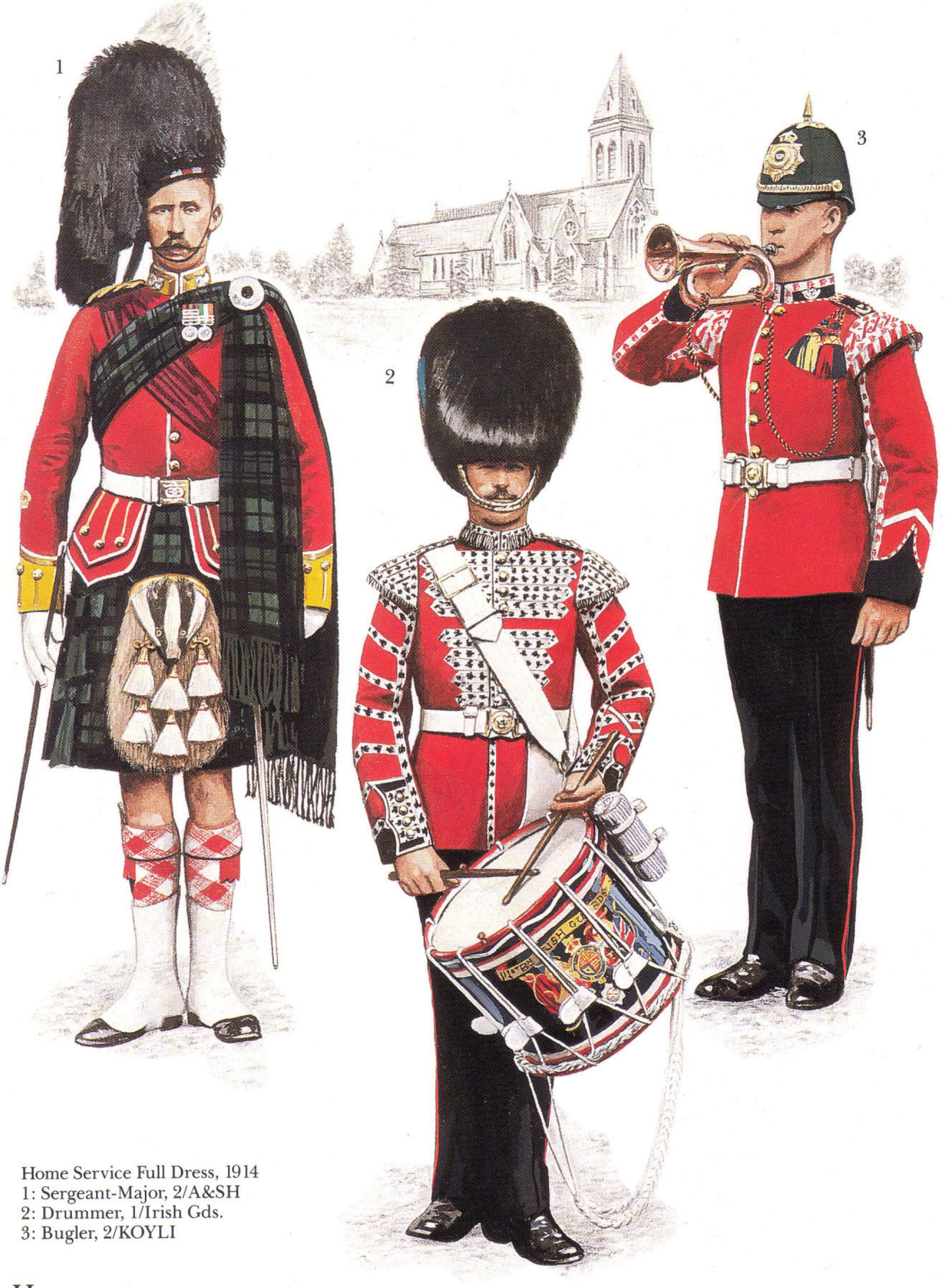
Home Service Full Dress, 1914
1: Lieutenant, RFA
2: Sapper, RE
3: Driver, ASC

F



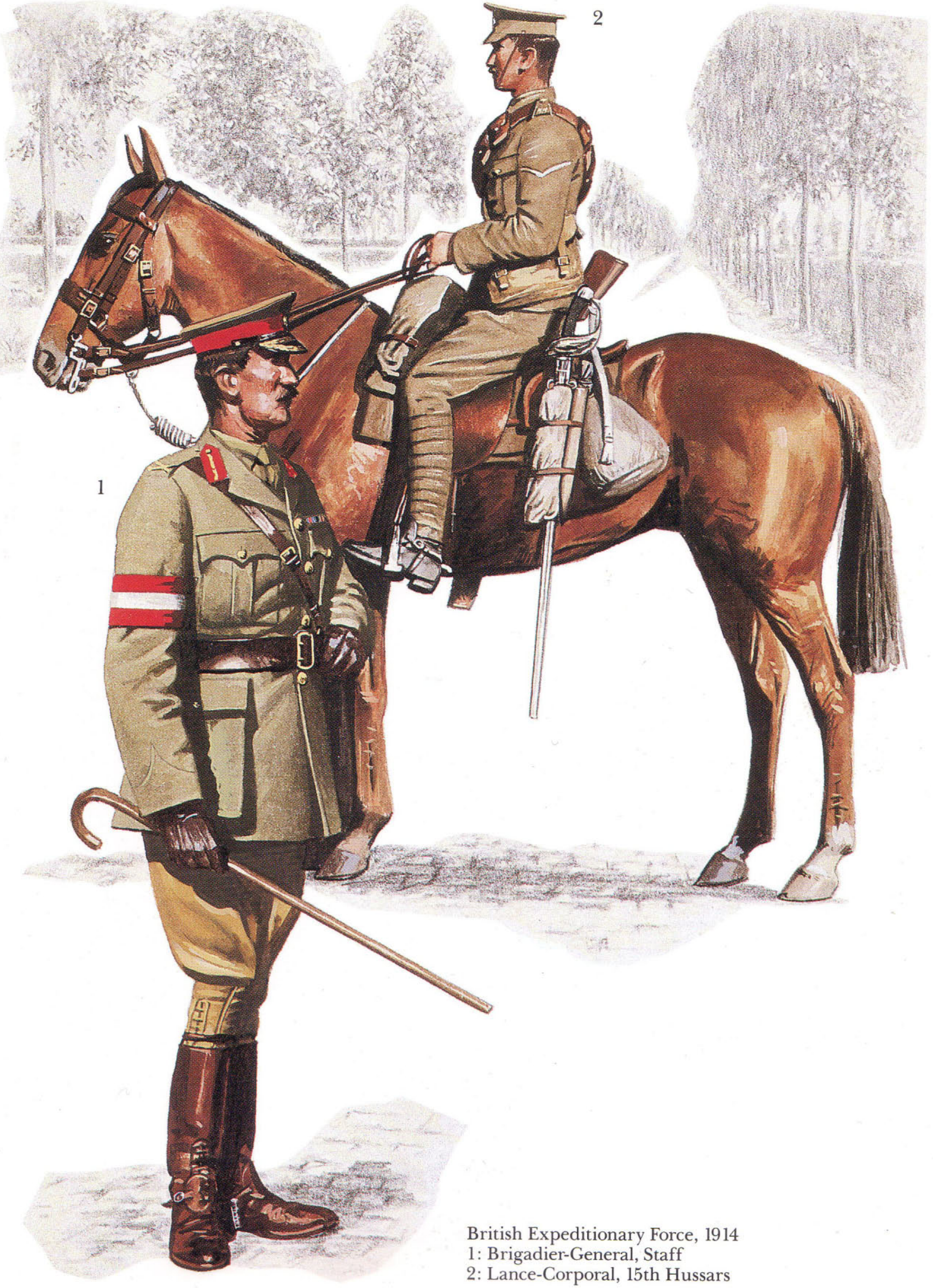
Home Service Full Dress, 1914
1: Captain, 1/Northamptons
2: Private, 2/Royal Scots
3: Sergeant, 2/KRRC

G

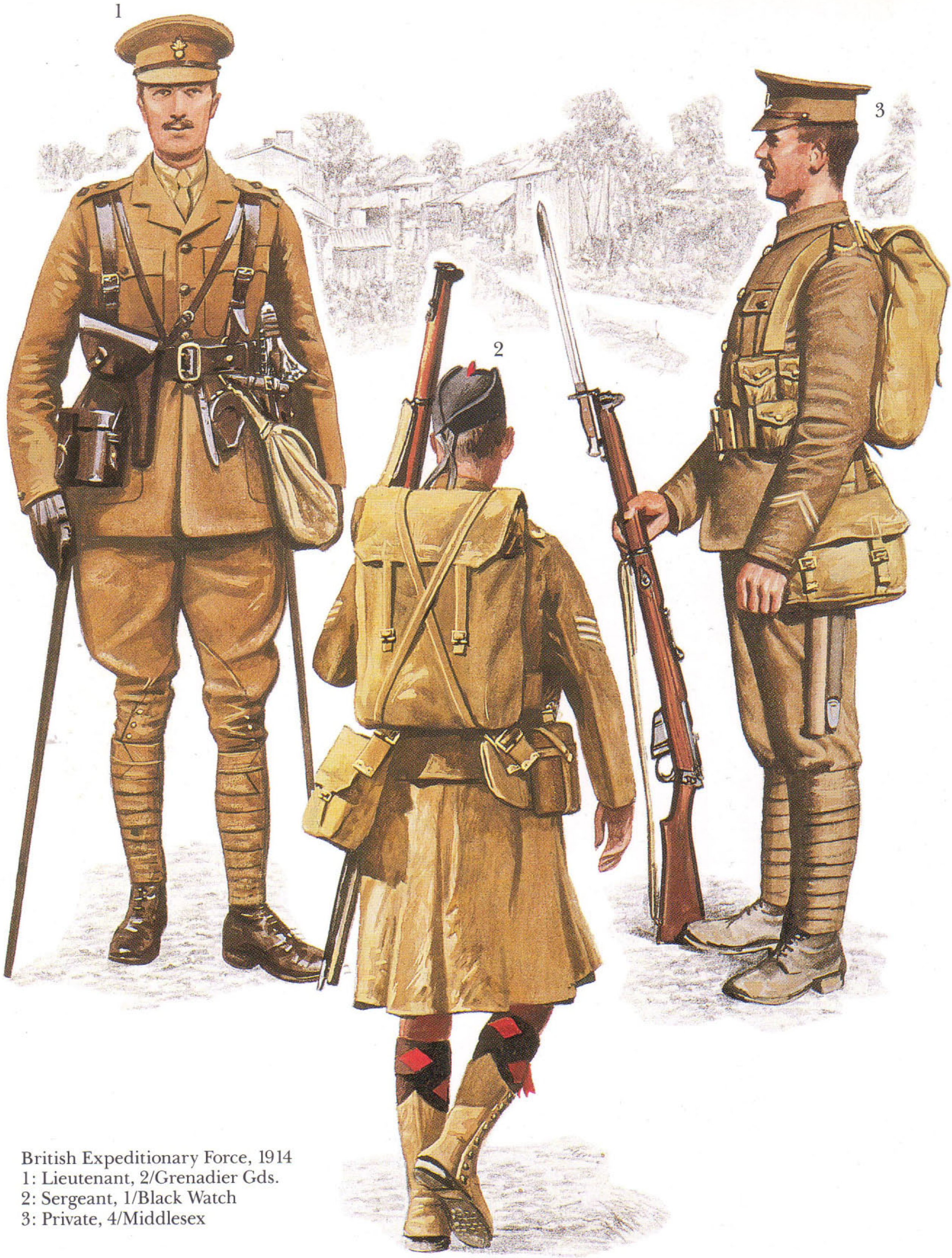


Home Service Full Dress, 1914
1: Sergeant-Major, 2/A&SH
2: Drummer, 1/Irish Gds.
3: Bugler, 2/KOYLI

H

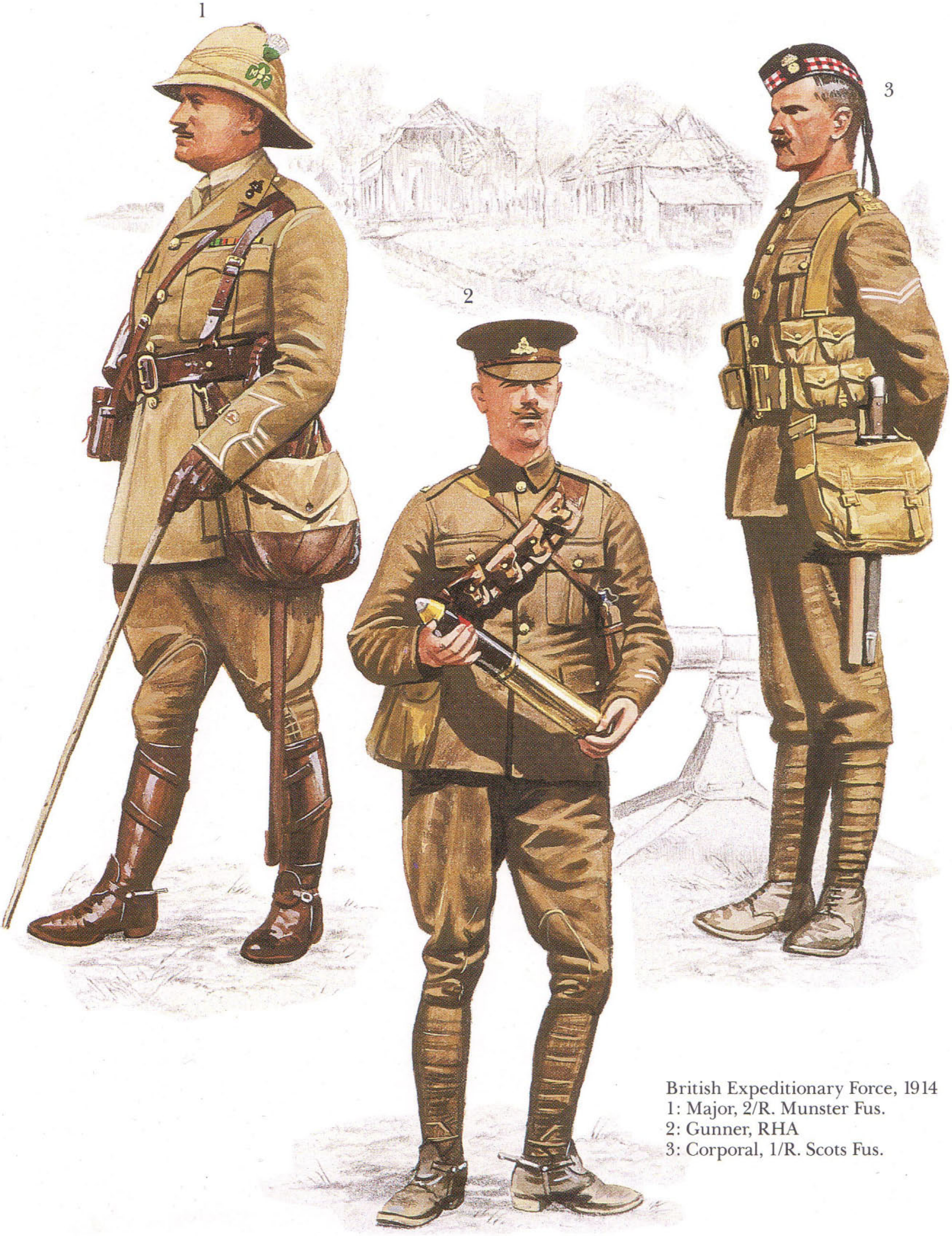


British Expeditionary Force, 1914
1: Brigadier-General, Staff
2: Lance-Corporal, 15th Hussars



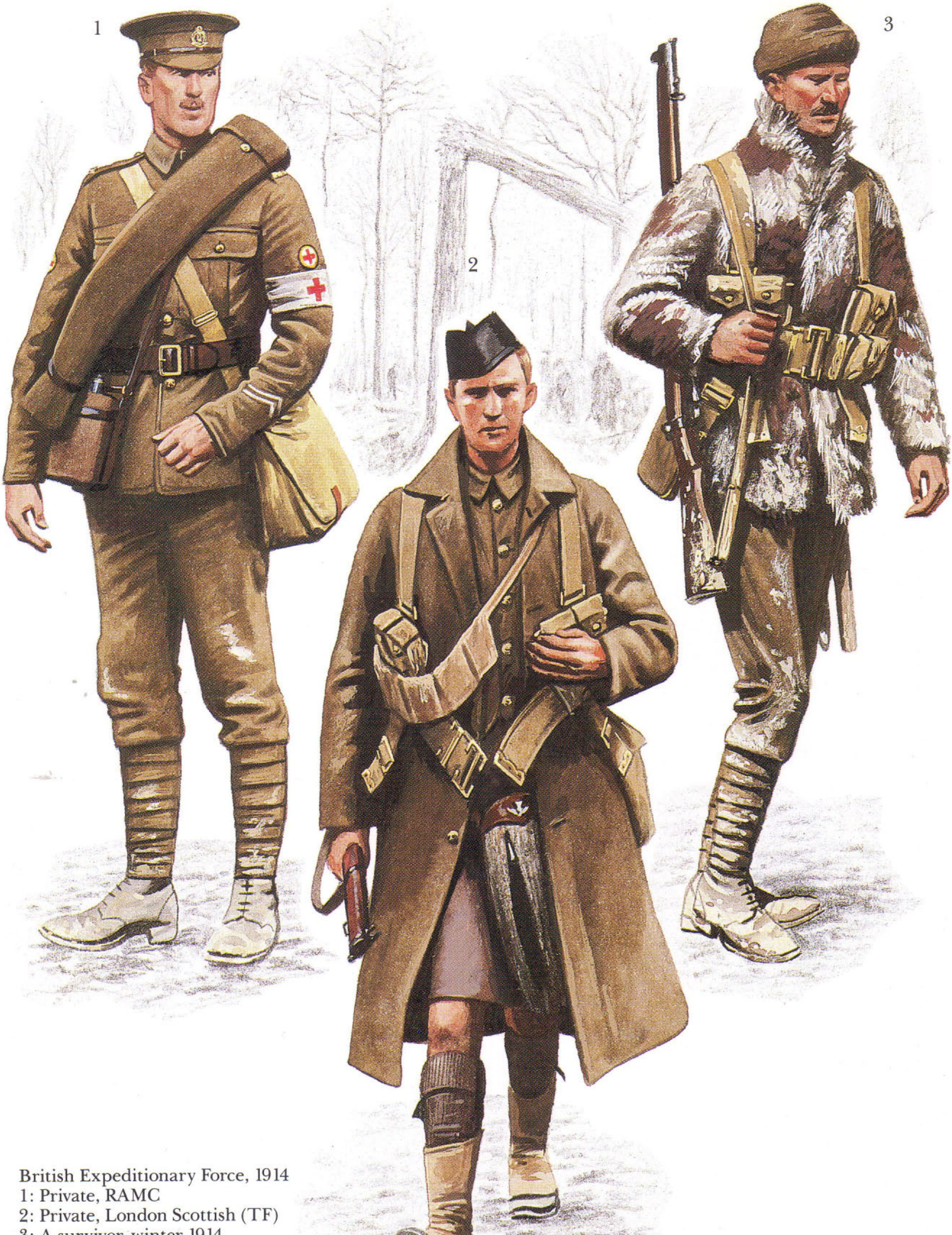
British Expeditionary Force, 1914
1: Lieutenant, 2/Grenadier Gds.
2: Sergeant, 1/Black Watch
3: Private, 4/Middlesex

J



British Expeditionary Force, 1914
1: Major, 2/R. Munster Fus.
2: Gunner, RHA
3: Corporal, 1/R. Scots Fus.

K



British Expeditionary Force, 1914
1: Private, RAMC
2: Private, London Scottish (TF)
3: A survivor, winter 1914

L

However, the weight of numbers both from the north and the north-east, where the 17th Division was now attacking, so threatened both battalions' flanks that they were forced to retreat still further, until by 4 pm they had taken up new positions north of Bois de l'Haut, where their right touched the left of the other battalions of their brigade, 1/Gordons and 2/Royal Scots.

Meanwhile 4/RF had been equally under pressure at the bridges. Most officers of the two forward companies were casualties but the musketry, and particularly the fire of Lt. Dease's machine-guns, had hitherto foiled all attempts to cross the canal, despite the bridge being still intact[29]. At 2 pm the forward companies were ordered to withdraw. They had 250 yards of open, fire-swept ground to cross before reaching the supporting companies. Dease, though hit three times, had kept his gun constantly in action but was now mortally wounded. Pte. Godley took over the gun and continued firing at the advancing Germans to cover the retreating companies despite his own wounds. He tipped his gun into the canal just before he was captured. The Fusiliers got clear away and marched back through Mons to their new position. Dease and Godley won the first VCs of the war.

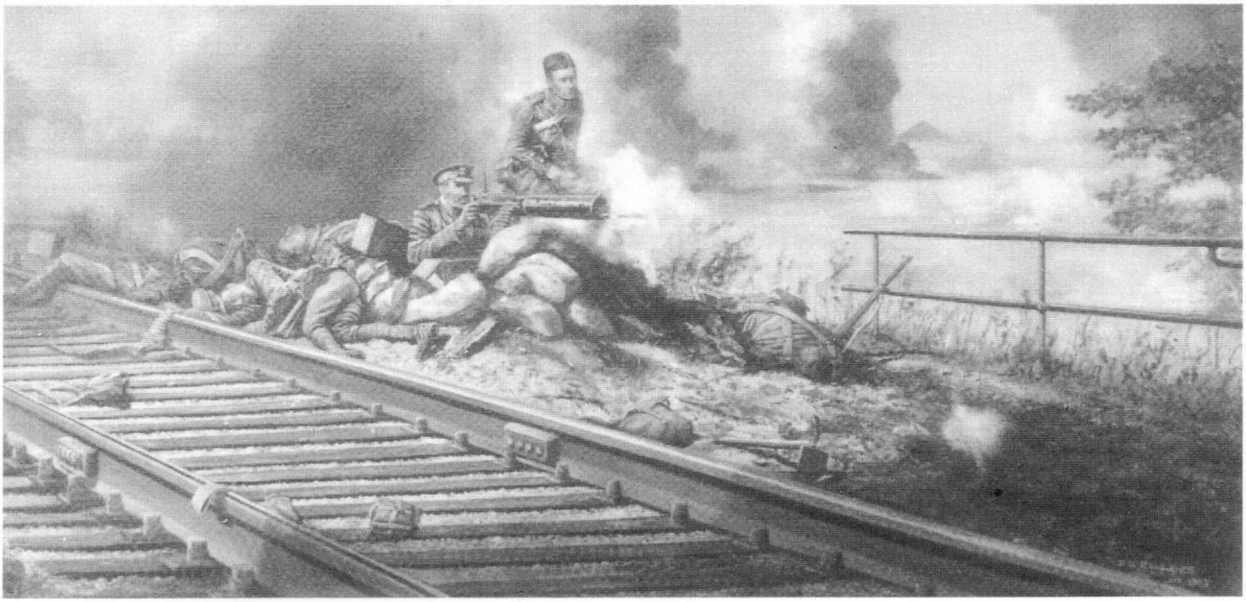
4/Middlesex and 2/Royal Irish had a hard fight withdrawing from Bois de l'Haut as their left flank was open following 9 Brigade's withdrawal. The Middlesex machine-gunners fired until their guns boiled over and they were overrun, but the battalion disengaged successfully. The Germans got between it and the Royal Irish, but both got back safely eventually to the new line three miles south of Mons.

4/RF had over 100 casualties, 2/Royal Irish over 300 and 4/Middlesex over 400. Enemy casualties are unknown but their official account tells of 'murderous fire' causing 'bloody losses'[30]. By their skill-at-arms, discipline and regimental cohesion, these three battalions, in common with others of II Corps, had disputed every yard and exacted a high price for the Germans' entry into Mons.

5th Division at Le Cateau

The BEF's retreat from Mons began on 24 August. Apart from rearguard clashes on the night of the 25th, I Corps' retirement was uneventful. II Corps, having borne the brunt at Mons, had to fight its way clear throughout the 24th and some rearguard actions on the 25th. Late that evening it halted west of Le Cateau, 25 miles south-west of Mons. The weather had been intensely hot, all were tired and hungry, and the Germans were close behind in great strength. Only by continuing the retreat that night could II Corps avoid a running battle with its

Lieut. Dease and Pte. Godley, 4/Royal Fusiliers, winning the VC while defending the Nimy bridge at Mons, 23 August. (David Rowlands; courtesy of the artist)



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[29] See Royal Engineers, following.

[30] Quoted *Official History* I, p. 94.

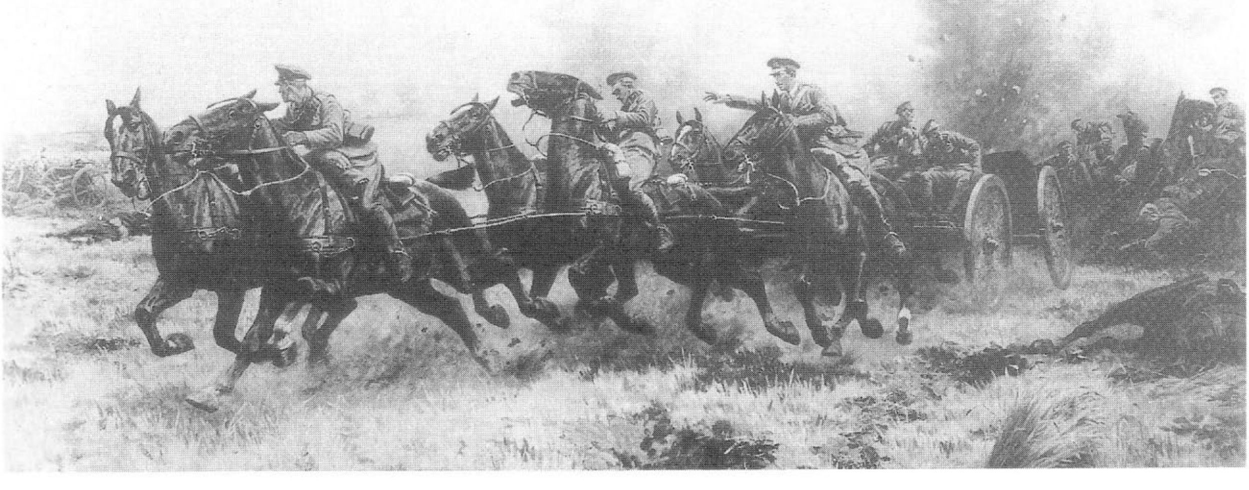
pursuers but that was impracticable. Smith-Dorrien decided to stand at Le Cateau to deal the enemy 'a smashing blow and to slip away before he could recover'[31]. In the event this aim was brilliantly achieved, and II Corps was hardly disturbed through the rest of the retreat. In its execution, however, not all were able to 'slip away'.

The right flank of II Corps' position was allotted to 5th Division, whose 14 Brigade overlooked the south-west exits from Le Cateau, its most forward battalion being 2/Suffolk. Some three-quarters of a mile westwards was the right forward battalion of 13 Brigade, 2/King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. In close support to 2/KOYLI was XXVIII Brigade RFA, and to 2/Suffolk XV Brigade and 37 (Howitzer) Battery RFA. The shallow trenches the infantry occupied in the open, undulating countryside had been hastily dug by French labour, and were sited on forward slopes overlooked from north-west round to east by higher ground soon to be in enemy hands. The positions had been occupied in the dark and selected originally with further withdrawal in mind, rather than a defensive battle, but there had not been time to change them. Nor was there opportunity to improve them, as the order to stand and fight only reached 13 and 14 Brigades at 6 am when the first German shells fired from north of Le Cateau began to fall on them.

For the next six hours these battalions and their gunners suffered a growing bombardment of shrapnel and HE as more German batteries came into action from the north-west and, by 10 am, from high ground to the east, which 5th Division had expected to be occupied by I Corps. Enfiladed from both flanks, the infantry in their shallow trenches could only endure, and the RFA suffered terribly from their exposed positions, though never ceasing to fire back. The moral support their closeness gave the infantry was counter-balanced by the fire their clearly visible gun-lines attracted, which fell equally on the KOYLI and Suffolk.

From 10 am onwards German infantry of one, later two divisions advanced in masses, first head-on from west of Le Cateau against 2/KOYLI and the Suffolks' left, and subsequently from the east against 14 Brigade's open flank. Though the shellfire still rained down, the infantry could now respond and their rifles and machine-guns inflicted great loss. 2/Suffolk was under the greatest pressure from two sides and, with 11/XV Battery out of action, suffered heavy casualties; but the battalion still held its ground, aided by some reinforcements from 2/Manchester and 2/Argylls which managed to get forward through the bombardment.

By early afternoon the right flank units were in such danger of being caught in a pincer movement, and their casualties were so heavy from the enemy's preponderance in guns and numbers, that Smith-Dorrien ordered the 5th Division's withdrawal. First to go were the remaining guns of XXVIII and XV Brigades, and much heroism was displayed by



Saving the guns of 37th (Howitzer) Battery RFA at Le Cateau, 26 August, for which the VC was awarded to Capt. Reynolds and Dvrs. Luke and Brain. (W. B. Wollen; NAM)

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[31] Quoted C. Ballard, *Smith-Dorrien* (1931) p. 176.

THE LATE MAJOR C.A.L. YATE.
2ND BN. KING'S OWN (YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY)
LANCE-CORPORAL F.W. HOLMES.
2ND BN. KING'S OWN (YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY)
DRIVER J.H.C. DRAIN.
37TH BATTERY R.F.A.
LANCE-CORPORAL WILLIAM FULLER.
2ND BN. WELSH REGIMENT.
PRIVATE S.F. GODLEY.
4TH BN. ROYAL FUSILIERS.
THE LATE CAPTAIN E.K. BRADBURY.
"L" BATTERY R.H.A.

Some early VCs. Top: Maj. Yate, L/Cpl. Holmes 2/KOYLI, Dvr. Brain RFA (Le Cateau). Bottom: L/Cpl. Fuller 2/Welch (Aisne), Pte. Godley 4/RF (Mons), Capt. Bradley RHA (Néry). (*Illustrated War News*, 1914)

their teams galloping down the shell-swept slopes to retrieve them; some guns could only be disabled. Without its artillery 2/Suffolk, which had stuck it out for nine hours, could no longer hold off the German infantry, soon coming in from three sides, and, with its Manchester and Argyll reinforcements, was finally overwhelmed, only a few getting away.

Meanwhile 13 Brigade was also withdrawing, but the order to retire never reached 2/KOYLI's closely-engaged forward companies. Outflanked from the ground previously held by the Suffolks, and heavily attacked on their now open left flank, the Yorkshire-men fought on under the inspiring leadership of Maj. Yate until eventually surrounded and overrun at about 4.30 pm. By its stubborn fight at the most threatened point of the whole II Corps position, 2/KOYLI had enabled the rest of 5th Division to break contact and retire unhindered, a most difficult feat when heavily attacked in daylight[32].

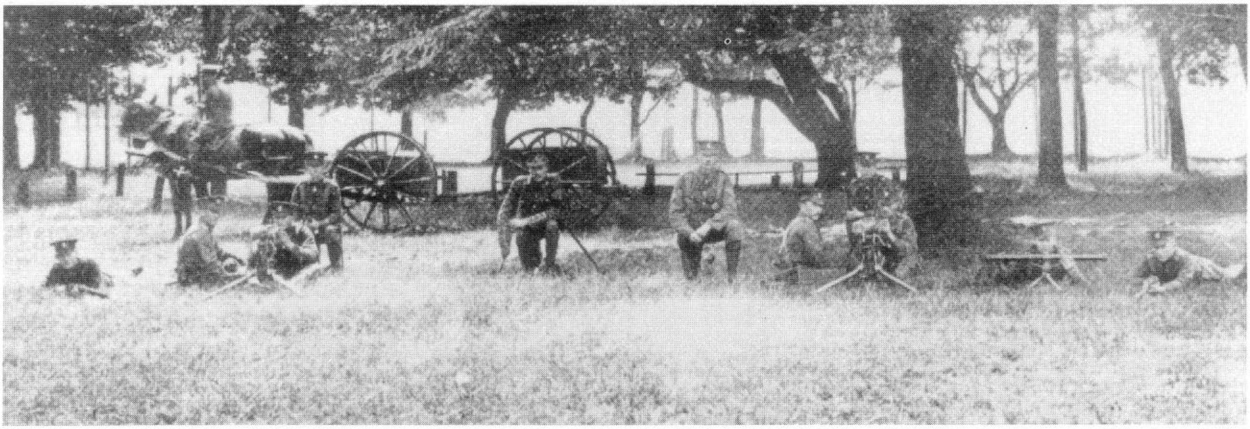
An officer of the German 7th Division wrote: 'Our men attacked with the utmost determination but again and again they were driven back by those incomparable soldiers. Regardless of loss the English artillery came forward to protect their infantrymen and in full view of our guns kept up a devastating fire'[33].

The Munsters at Etreux

While II Corps fought at Le Cateau, I Corps continued the retreat, halting that night around Etreux. When its march was continued on 27 August its rearguard was provided by 1 (Guards) Brigade whose rearmost party, consisting of Maj. Charrier's 2/Royal Munster Fusiliers, two troops 15th Hussars and two guns 118th Battery RFA, occupied a delaying position two miles wide covering the approaches to the villages of Fesmy and Bergues, some four miles north of Etreux.

[32] Yate received the VC, as did Cpl. Holmes of 2/KOYLI.

[33] Quoted Ascoli p. 100.



2/Royal Munster Fusiliers' machine-gun section at Aldershot before leaving for France with 1(Guards) Brigade. Lieut. Chute (centre) was killed at Etreux. Sgt. Johnson (also kneeling) fought the guns until ammunition ran out, then smashed them. Note rangefinder, second from right and GS limbered wagon in rear. (NAM)

Charrier was ordered to hold this position until directed or forced to retire.

Apart from two cavalry patrols no Germans approached the Munsters until 10.30 am when infantry of the X Reserve Corps began attacking from the north-east, first towards Bergues, held by half A Company and a troop of 15th Hussars, then extending the attack against the Munsters' left, B and D Companies. The Irishmen, well-entrenched, had no difficulty maintaining their positions, and around noon there was a lull. Half an hour later the Germans attacked again in greater strength against the Munsters' flanks. Charrier's four companies and two guns were now being attacked by three battalions of the 15th Reserve Regiment, and he ordered B and D Companies to fall back to join C and half A in front of Fesmy. The enemy infantry, hampered by the thick hedges and wary of the Munsters' musketry, followed up slowly. Then, as their own artillery came into action, they launched a strong attack on Fesmy, driving cattle before them. Some Germans got into the village but were thrown out by a C Company counter-attack. At 1.15 pm Charrier sent a message to his brigade HQ that he was holding his position and 'getting on well. We are killing plenty of them'.[34] What he did not know was that at 1 pm all 1 (Guards) Brigade units had been ordered to retire immediately. Though sent by two means, this message never reached the Munsters, who continued to hold off the German attacks. The detachment at Bergues, however, had been compelled to withdraw south-west.

At 2.30 pm having halted the attack on Fesmy, Charrier felt able to disengage and, with B and D Companies guarding his flanks, began his retreat southwards. The thick hedges and renewed German pressure on the rearmost company slowed the retreat, and it was 5.45 pm before Etreux came in sight. As the leading company approached the village it was fired on by infantry from the houses and by artillery some three-quarters of a mile away to the east. The Munsters' line of retreat was cut and the rest of their brigade was now too far off to assist.

Over the next hour Charrier led attacks under heavy fire to try to break through. In one company only two men reached the German positions; in another all five officers were killed. Charrier's conspicuous figure (Plate K1) drew much fire as he encouraged his men, and towards 7 pm he was killed. Hopelessly outnumbered and unable to prevail, the survivors fell back to an orchard. There, under command of the senior unwounded officer, Lt. Gower, they fought off German attacks from all sides for another two hours. Finally at 9.15 pm with their ammunition almost exhausted and the Germans crowding in on the orchard, the last 250 Munsters were overrun. The battalion had been in action for nearly 12 hours, ultimately against nine German battalions. By their resistance and sacrifice the Munsters had enabled I Corps to get away.

The orchard where the last stand was made today forms the war cemetery of 2/Royal Munster Fusiliers and their supporting gunners of 118th Battery.

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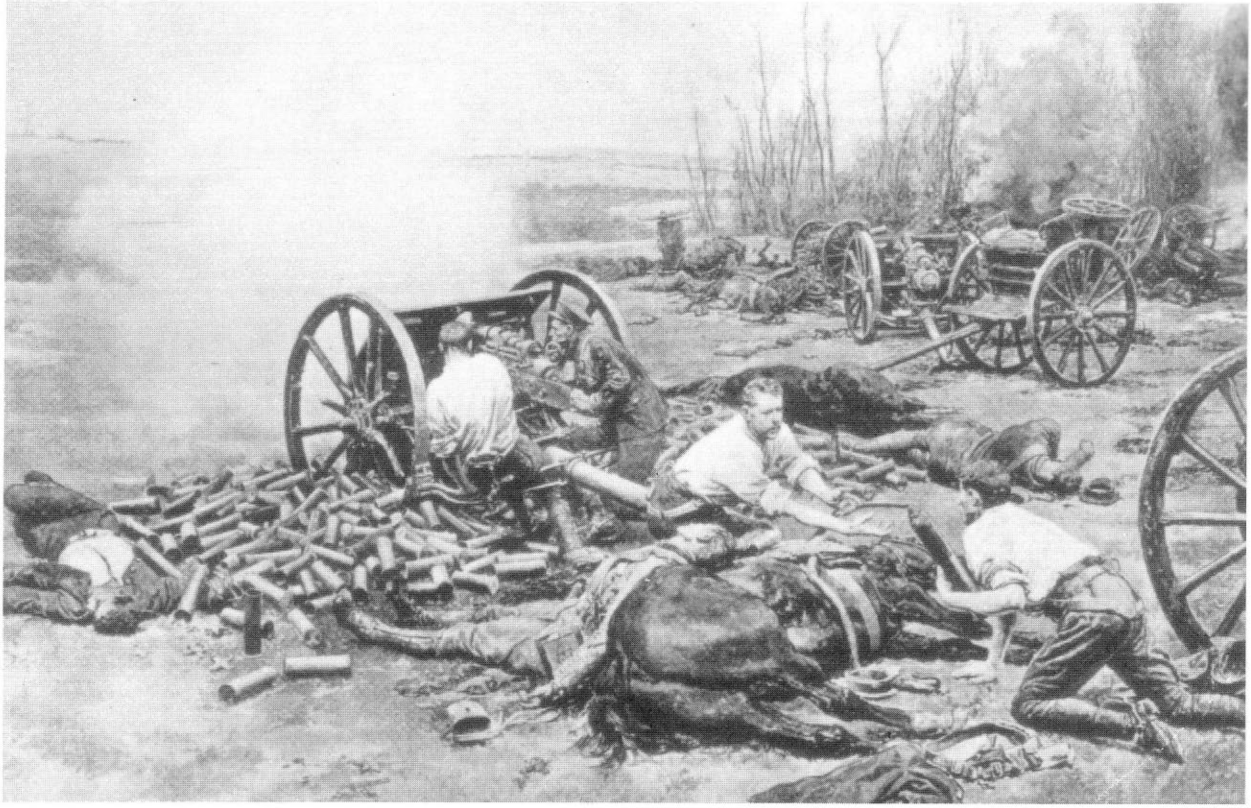
[34] *Official History* I, p. 222.

RHA at Néry

Dawn of 1 September found 1 Cavalry Brigade (nine squadrons) and L Battery RHA bivouacked in the village of Néry surrounded by thick mist. At 5.30 am, as the men breakfasted and watered their horses, an 11th Hussars patrol galloped in to report a large body of German cavalry approaching—as it turned out, the 4th Cavalry Division (24 squadrons, one Jäger battalion). Soon afterwards the mist began to clear and heavy shell, rifle and machine-gun fire was opened from a ridge 600 yards to the east, where the German cavalry prepared to attack dismounted, supported by its 12 guns intermingled with six machine-guns. Worst hit were the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Bays), whose horses bolted, and L Battery which, being limbered up ready to move, offered a prime target—men, horses and guns all being smashed up. Capt. Bradbury managed to get three guns unlimbered and manhandled into action but one soon received a direct hit, and a second, after returning fire for some while, was also silenced. Only No. 6 gun remained in action under concentrated German fire, but with fewer and fewer men to crew it.

Meanwhile the Brigade HQ had sent off for assistance and the dismounted cavalrymen of the three regiments were firing back from the houses. A Bays machine-gun was particularly effective, preventing the Germans from approaching closer than 500 yards. No. 6 gun, though knocked about and with many of its successive crews casualties, continued to fire, but soon there only remained to serve it Capt. Bradbury, BSM Dorrell, Sgt. Nelson, Gnr. Darbyshire and Dvr. Osborne. By their devoted efforts to keep this last gun in action, these survivors of L Battery had silenced some of the German guns, enabling two squadrons of 5th Dragoon Guards to gallop north out of Néry, swing east, dismount and open rifle fire on the enemy's right flank. Bradbury then had both his legs blown off and Nelson was severely wounded, leaving only Dorrell, Darbyshire and Osborne on the gun for which, after two and a half hours' firing, there remained only one or two rounds. As No. 6 fired its last round, I Battery RHA and 4 Cavalry Brigade, followed by three battalions, went into action against the ridge. The Germans, badly hit by 1 Cavalry Brigade, began to retire in disorder,



No. 6 Gun of L Battery RHA, 1 Cavalry Brigade, in action at Néry, 1 September. (F. Matania; NAM)

After the Néry action: 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays) with captured German hussars. Note the Bays' cap curtains. (Cameronians Museum)

abandoning eight of the guns that had caused such casualties in L Battery. A squadron of 11th Hussars pursued, returning later with 78 prisoners. The 4th German Cavalry Division, on whom the tables had been so surprisingly turned, was withdrawn into reserve.

The VC was awarded to Bradbury (posthumously), Dorrell and Nelson, the DCM to Darbyshire and Osborne. No. 6 gun can be seen today at the Royal Artillery Museum.

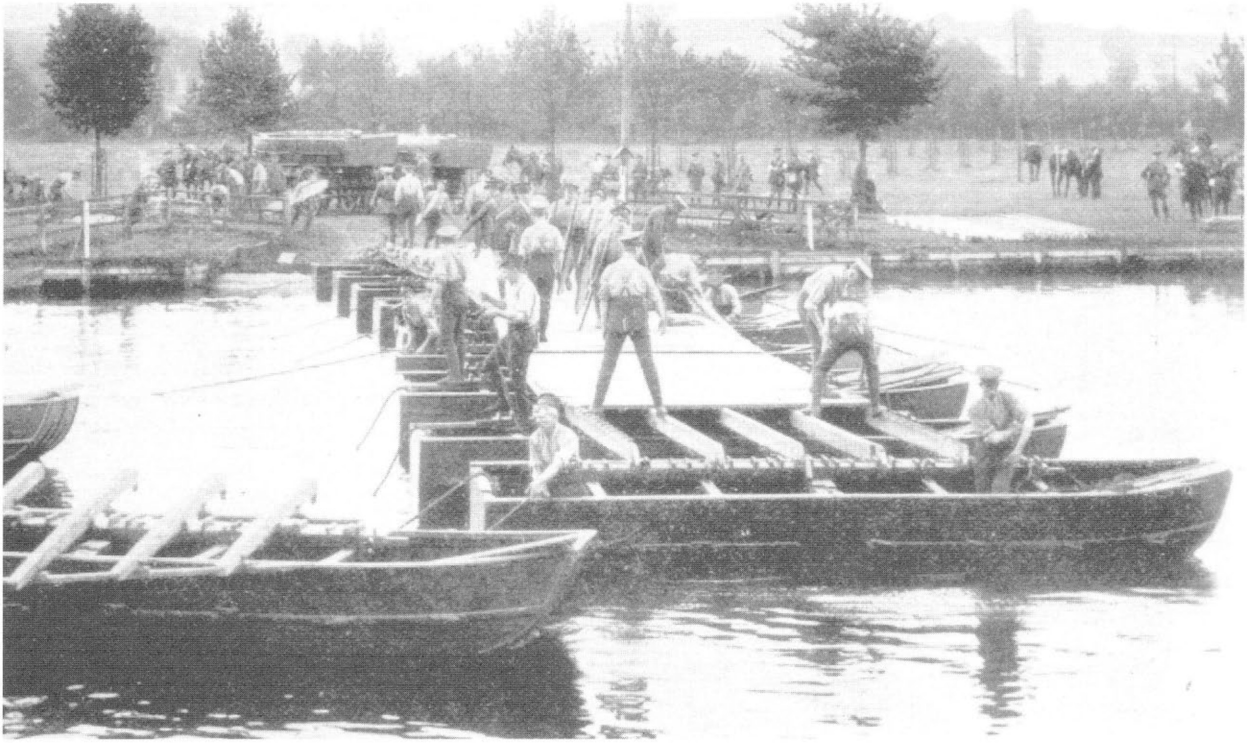
Royal Engineers at the Bridges

Until 22 August it was generally understood that the BEF was advancing to attack, on the French left, the German armies. In such circumstances the Royal Engineers' bridging tasks would be constructive and the BEF's sappers were prepared accordingly. Within a day, however, the BEF was defending the Mons Canal and its bridges, and the sappers' task had, overnight and unexpectedly, become destructive. During the Battle of Mons II Corps' RE field companies worked devotedly under constant fire to blow the bridges, in some cases successfully, in others not, due either to enemy action or defective equipment.

One difficulty was lack of exploders to fire the charges. At the Mariette bridge, defended by 1/Northumberland Fusiliers, Capt. Wright of 57th Field Company swung himself forward hand over hand under intense fire to set the charges but without success. Though wounded in the head he tried again; but still the charges failed to explode and the bridge remained intact. Fortunately the Fusiliers' musketry enabled them and the sappers to withdraw safely. At Jemappes bridge, held by 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers, L/Cpl. Jarvis of the same RE company, aided by Pte. Heron 1/RSF, worked for one and a half hours as the fire-fight raged round them to lay the charges and ultimately blew the bridge successfully. Wright and Jarvis both received the VC and Heron the DCM.

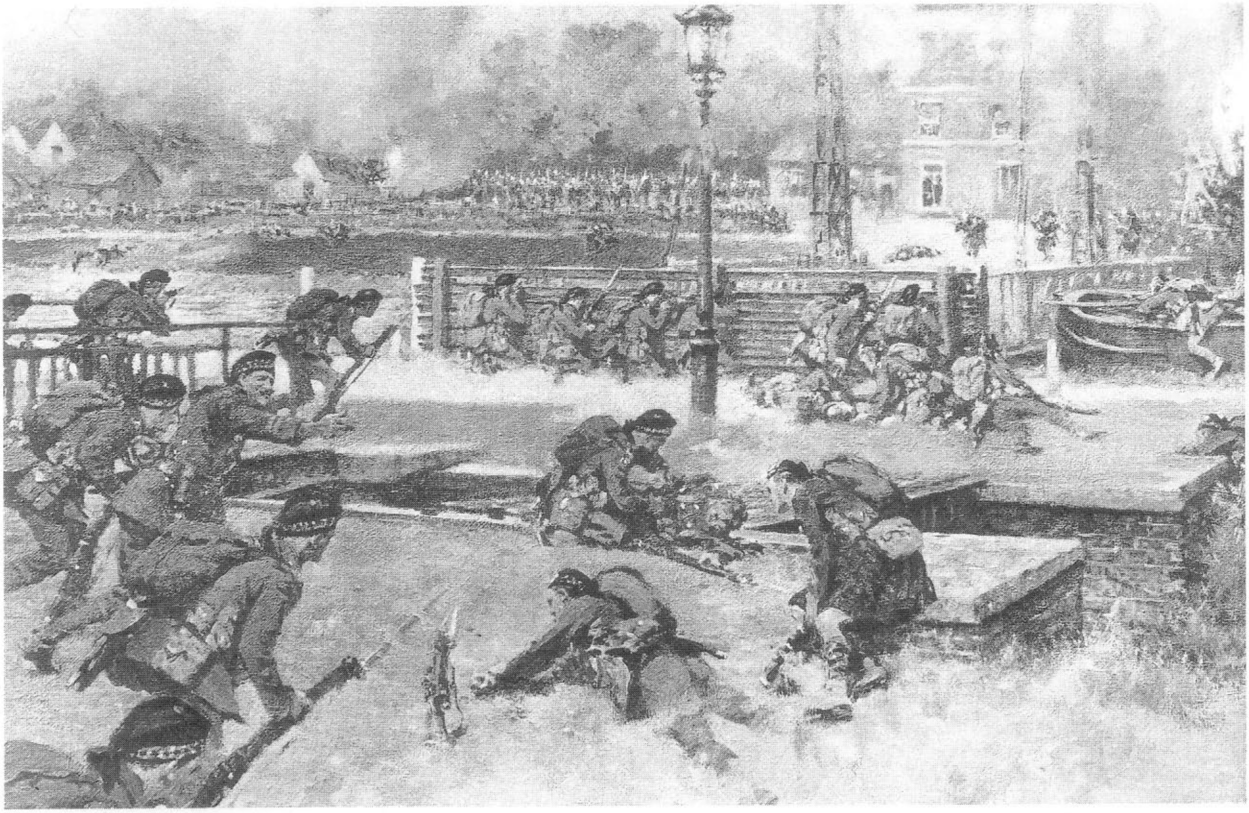
Some three weeks later, as the BEF attacked across the Aisne, the Royal Engineers' main task became the conveying of the other Arms across the 60 yards-wide, unfordable river. This involved the reconnaissance and repair of existing bridges and the construction of pontoon and floating bridges or rafts, most of it under shelling or machine-gun fire from the heights on the far bank where the Germans knew the exact ranges to the river. These long hours spent in mud and water were made worse by a change in the weather that now brought cold, driving rain.

On the II Corps front Lt. Pennycuik RE made a daring reconnaissance of the destroyed Missy bridge from an improvised raft. Its repair required so many hours of work that rafting was adopted by



(*Above*) Royal Engineers constructing a pontoon bridge in peacetime. The pontoons were launched from their wagons (background), hauled into position and the plank roadway laid thereon. At the Aisne this was usually done under heavy fire. (Author's collection)

(*Below*) Defence of the Jemappes bridge at Mons by 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers, 3rd Division, where L/Cpl. Jarvis RE and Pte. Heron RSF won the VC and DCM respectively for blowing the bridge successfully. (Gilbert Holiday; Royal Highland Fusiliers)



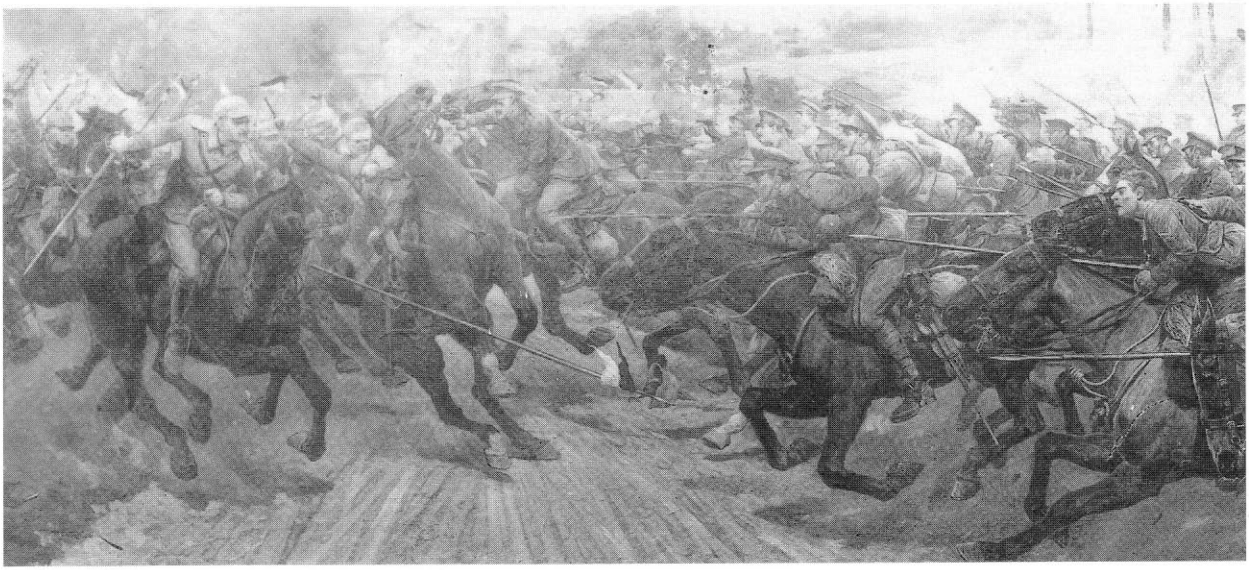
59th Field Company to transport the infantry, who then became pinned down on the far bank by fire which continued all day. Capt. Johnston and Lt. Flint won the VC and DSO respectively for their ferrying back and forward the wounded and fresh ammunition. On the same day Capt. Wright, the Mons VC, was killed while controlling 5 Cavalry Brigade's passage of the Vailly bridge in single file under heavy shell fire. Thanks to his cool handling of the crossing and the steadiness of his sappers of 57th Company, the Brigade only had some 40 men wounded. The *Official History's* verdict on the Royal Engineers' work was that they had always 'displayed conspicuous energy and self-sacrifice'.

9th Lancers – Shock and Fire

The pre-war believers in shock action, especially those who had welcomed the re-introduction of the lance in 1909, might have claimed their case vindicated, albeit briefly and on a much smaller scale than they had anticipated, by the action at Moncel on 7 September during the Battle of the Marne. The 9th Lancers, leading 2 Cavalry Brigade, had cleared the village of German cavalry patrols. Lt. Col. Campbell, accompanied by part of B Squadron, had halted on the outskirts when a German squadron of the 1st Guard Dragoons, also armed with lances, charged his party at a canter in a single line. Campbell immediately led his 30-odd lancers into a gallop at the left half of the enemy line, and crashed into them. A mêlée followed, lance against lance, then the 9th broke through and wheeled back to Moncel to join another troop, having lost three killed and eight wounded, including Campbell himself, slightly, and his adjutant. The German squadron bore away but shortly afterwards charged a dismounted squadron of the 18th Hussars whose rapid rifle fire cost the dragoons two-thirds of their strength.

Earlier, on 24 August at Elouges, the 9th had used their rifles to good effect against German infantry, but later the same day an order to charge the flank of another infantry column with supporting artillery, undertaken against Campbell's tactical judgement, proved the fallacy of shock action. Galloping forward in columns of squadrons, the 9th only succeeded in spearing some scouts before being checked with heavy loss by the fire of six batteries.

By mid-October, when the Cavalry Corps was holding ground near Messines, rifles had entirely supplanted lances, as Capt. Grenfell, who had won the VC at Elouges, wrote: 'We have had five of the hardest days of the war in trenches repelling German attacks. I am afraid all the cavalry traditions are for ever ended, and we have become mounted infantry pure and simple, with very little mounted about it'[35]. Mounted infantry indeed they were on 28 October when they galloped forward by squadrons in open order under shell fire to



Lance against lance at Moncel, 7 September. Lt.-Col. Campbell and the 9th Lancers charging the 1st Guard Dragoons. (R. Caton Woodville; 9th/12th Royal Lancers)

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[35] Quoted E. Sheppard, *The Ninth Queen's Royal Lancers* (1936), p. 252.

dismount and hold a road with rifle fire, thereby providing a line behind which the remnants of a broken Indian battalion could re-form. The combination of mobility and firepower had blocked a sudden gap through which the Germans would otherwise have poured.

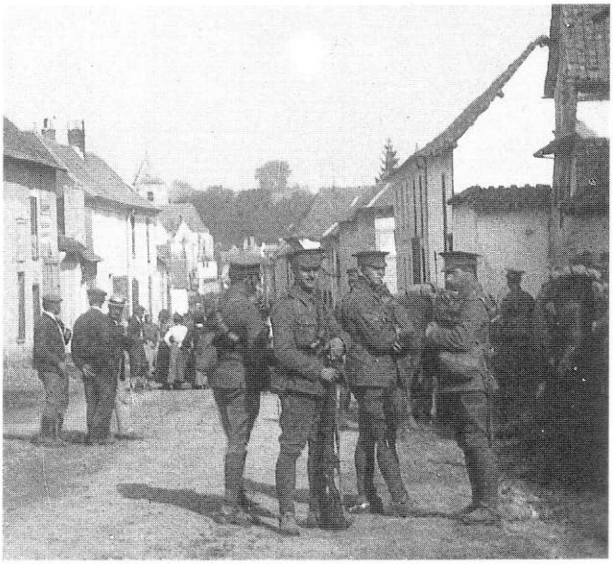
Three days later they were infantry pure and simple, temporarily under command of 1 Cavalry Brigade and holding an exposed salient position in front of Messines with only some 150 rifles against 12 German battalions attacking on both flanks, supported by a heavy bombardment. Against such overwhelming odds the 9th's three squadrons were forced back until their original line formed three sides of a square. At one point, being attacked from both sides, Grenfell ordered the even numbers of his squadron to face one way, the odd numbers the other. Having evacuated one trench as no longer tenable, he heard firing still coming from one end of it. He ran back and found Cpl. Seaton and one man with a machine-gun still engaging the Germans, now only 30 yards away. Despite the enemy's proximity they managed to rejoin the squadron, Grenfell covering the machine-gunners with his revolver.

By the time the regiment had been driven back to Messines three-quarters of the officers and a third of the men were casualties. The German pressure was unrelenting, and the 9th must have been overrun had they not been ordered to retire through the 11th Hussars, who had just formed a support line behind them. The remains of the 9th got safely away beyond the village but the 11th, the Bays and 5th Dragoon Guards fought on from the houses until infantry reinforcements came up. It was here that the Territorials of the London Scottish made their famous Hallowe'en counter-attack. Despite every effort around Messines, however, the place was untenable and, early on 1 November, 1 Cavalry Brigade was withdrawn from it.

The Worcesters at Gheluvelt

Military operations in the Great War, even in 1914, were on such a scale that there was little scope for decisive action by a single unit. Yet the exception to this was proved on 31 October during the fighting around Gheluvelt in the great struggle known as First Ypres.

In the last week of October 52 German battalions supported by over 700 guns were attacking on a seven-mile front with the aim of breaking through the BEF to Ypres, the key to the Channel ports. The German right wing's axis was up the Menin Road on which, five miles from Ypres, stood the village of Gheluvelt, defended by eight battalions of 1st Division. No longer were these the thousand-strong battalions of August: they mustered, on average, some 300 men each. The first German attack on the 31st by 27 battalions made little progress but it was followed at 8 am by a two-hour bombardment of such intensity and accuracy that it literally blasted a hole in the British line. Much weakened by the shellfire and outnumbered by ten to one, the survivors met the advancing enemy infantry with rifle fire so rapid and effective that many Germans believed they faced massed machine-guns. Nevertheless, by 11.45 am four British battalions had almost ceased to exist[36] and Gheluvelt had been lost, except for its château to the north-east where 1/South Wales Borderers and 1/Scots Guards still held out. For the German infantry, resting from their efforts and awaiting reinforcements, the road to Ypres lay open.


Dismounted 11th Hussars in a French village, October 1914. (IWM)

During the morning the GOC 2nd Division had put Maj. Hankey's 2/Worcesters of his 5 Brigade at 1st Division's disposal. One company had already been sent forward, so its remaining three were now

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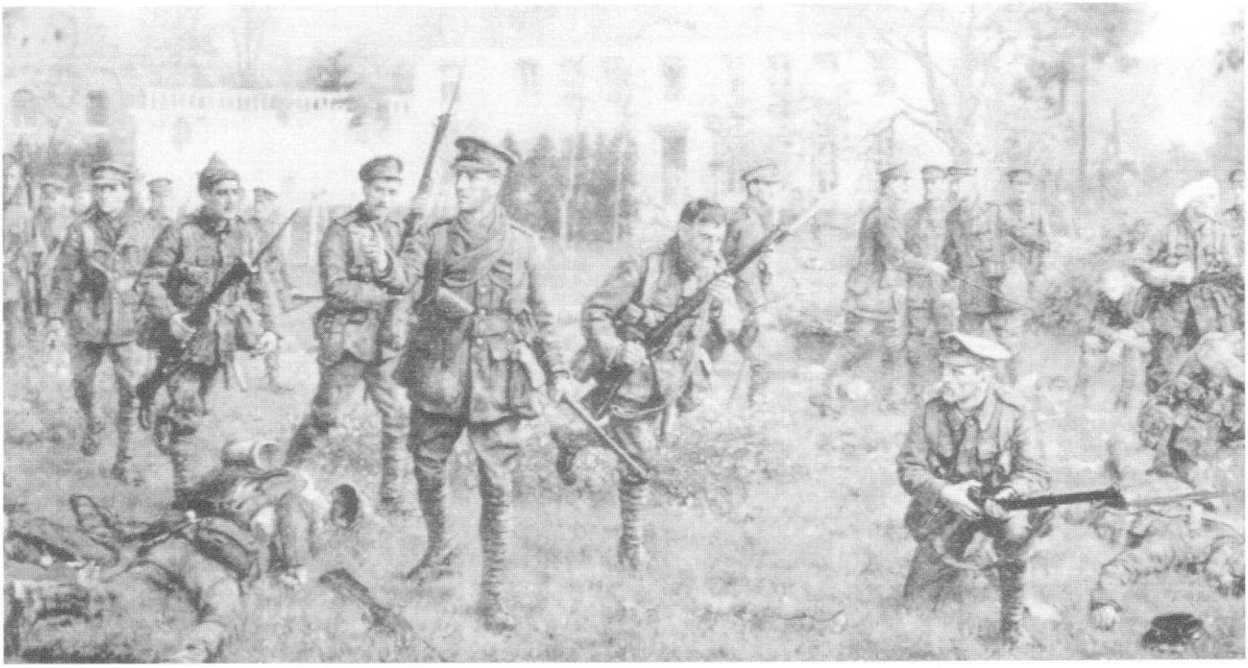
[36] 1/Queen's, 2/Welch, 1/Loyals of 1st Division; 2/RSF of 7th Division.



2/Worcestershire linking up with 1/South Wales Borderers in the grounds of Gheluvelt Château after their attack on 31 October. (J. P. Beadle; NAM)

the only I Corps reserve. To make matters worse German shells suddenly fell on the combined HQs of 1st and 2nd Divisions, incapacitating both staffs. Brig-Gen. Fitzclarence, commanding 1 (Guards) Brigade, now ordered Hankey 'to counter-attack with the utmost vigour the enemy in possession of Gheluvelt'[37].

Supported by XLI Brigade RFA, 2/Worcesters advanced, packs off and bayonets fixed with two companies forward and one in reserve. At first they were screened by trees but, on reaching a rise, they saw the shell-swept open ground littered with sights of death and defeat stretching ahead for a thousand yards to the burning village. Undaunted the Worcesters pressed on, though 100 men fell from the shrapnel soon bursting among them. They charged into the château grounds, surprising 1/SWB as much as the Germans, whom they demoralised by the fury of their onslaught. As the enemy broke, the Worcesters lined a sunken road between the château and the village and opened rapid fire to hasten the Germans' flight and deter reinforcements from coming forward. Then, joined by their fourth company, they advanced to clear the remaining enemy out of Gheluvelt. The battered 1st Division rallied, and by 4 pm the village had been recaptured and former positions re-occupied.

Royal Army Medical Corps loading wounded on to an ambulance at Gheluvelt. (IWM)

Out of seven officers and 350 men who started the attack, the battalion lost three officers and 189 men. Later FM Sir John French said, 'The Worcesters saved the Empire'. More prosaically, Pte. Cole reckoned 'we plugged the gap to Calais'[38].

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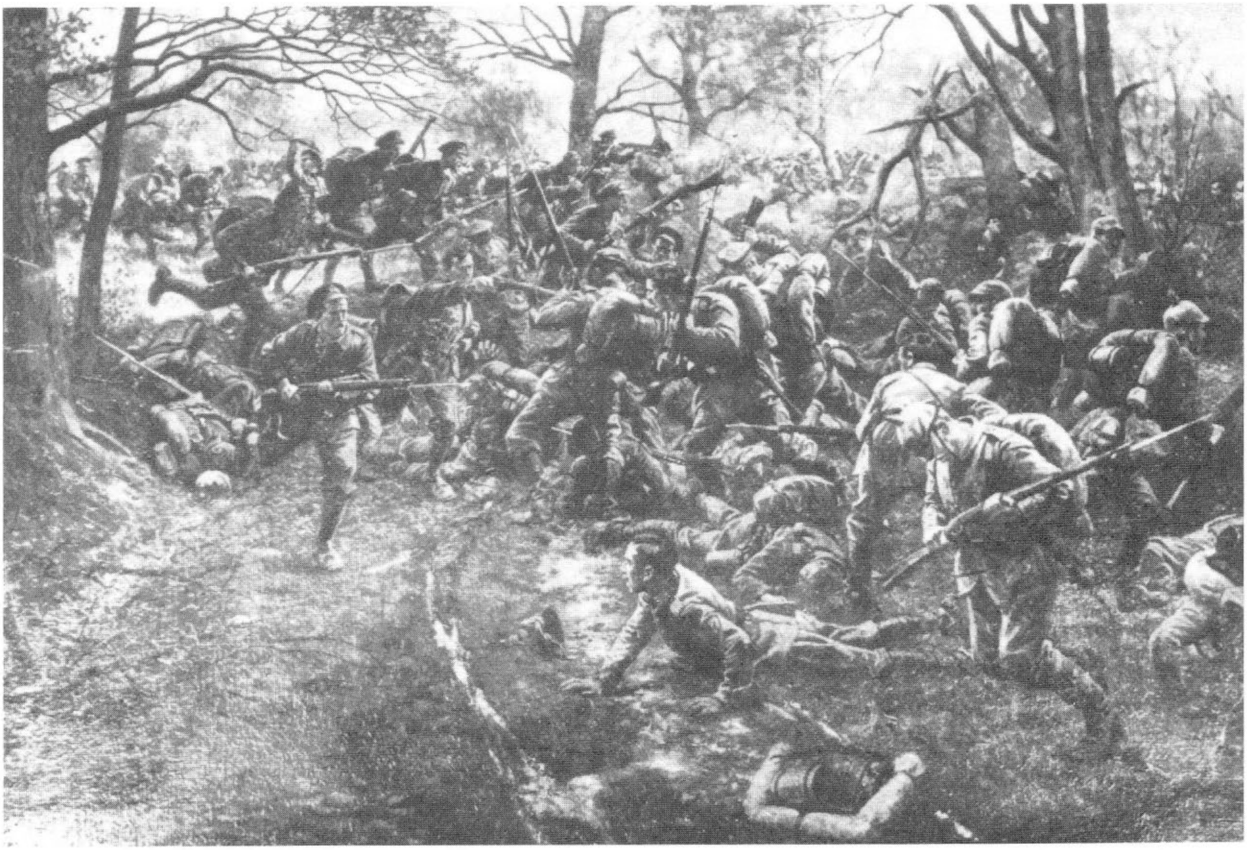
[37] Quoted Ascoli, p. 231.

[38] Quoted (French) E. Owen, *1914 – Glory Departing* (1986), p. 112; (Cole) L. Macdonald, *1914* (1987), p. 391.



The end of First Ypres: Nonne Boschen, 11 November—2/Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, 2nd Division, attacking the Prussian Guard, 'not one under six feet tall' according to Pte. Lay. (W. B. Wollen; Royal Green Jackets)

Epilogue

Of the BEF's stand at Ypres, the German official monograph stated: 'The fact that neither the enemy commanders nor their troops gave way under the strong pressure we put on them, but continued to fight the battle, though their situation was most perilous, gives us an opportunity to acknowledge that there were men of real worth opposed to us who did their duty thoroughly'.[39] By then, however, Britain's peacetime 'red little army' had sadly become 'the dead little army'. Of the thousand men per battalion who had landed in August, there remained, on average, one officer and 30 men.

Among the many qualities demonstrated by the old Regular Army during its passing in the first three months of the war, the British *Official History* singled out the ordinary soldiers' 'staunchness, patience, indomitable cheerfulness under incessant hardship, their calm, cool courage in spite of fire which no human being had ever before experienced . . . though their dearest friends, comrades of many years, fell beside them, they fought with all the majesty of their ancestors, without anger or malice'.

Nowadays the word 'mercenary' applied to soldiering has acquired a pejorative connotation, but in his *Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries* the poet A. E. Housman paid tribute to Britain's professional soldiers who, having accepted 'the King's shilling', repaid it with their duty and their lives:

'These, in the day when heaven was falling,
The hour when earth's foundation fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
And took their wages and are dead.

'Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
And saved the sum of things for pay.'[40]

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[39] Quoted Ascoli, p. 228.

[40] A private's daily pay rate was 1 shilling (5p) in the Infantry, 1s. 2d. in the Cavalry—a lower wage than any civilian except girls under 18.

German prisoners under infantry escort being marched back down the Menin Road towards Ypres; two British walking wounded at right. (IWM)

The Plates

Introduction

The clothing in which the BEF went to war in 1914—the most advanced service uniform in Europe—had developed from the khaki serge Service Dress (SD) introduced after the Boer War by Army Orders (AO) 10 and 40 of 1902. This dress had been an improved version of the khaki serge hastily manufactured and despatched to South Africa when the khaki drill (KD) foreign service dress worn at the start of the war proved insufficiently warm or hard-wearing. Unlike its predecessors, the 1902 SD for No. 2 Dress (Marching Order) and No. 3 Dress (Drill Order), and its KD equivalent, was authorised for all purposes at home and abroad, except for ceremonial and walking-out, for which Full, or No. 1 Dress was retained; officers additionally had No. 4 Dress (Mess Dress) and No. 5 Undress (frock-coat). The old Undress in traditional colours[41] ceased to be worn at home, though a form of it was retained for certain ceremonial occasions abroad. Full Dress remained as it had been before the Boer War but with some changes of detail.

Between 1902 and 1914 universal SD and its headgear received some modifications, but from 1907 the soldiers' pattern had assumed the form used in 1914. Officers' jackets underwent a major change in 1913 when the closed, turn-down collar gave way to an open, step collar revealing the shirt-collar and tie, thereby reducing the five large buttons in front to four. As netherwear all mounted officers wore Bedford cord breeches, with brown field boots in mounted units, brown ankle boots and leggings in dismounted units; dismounted officers wore 'breeches, knicker-bocker' with brown ankle boots and puttees. Soldiers wore puttees and ankle boots, with Bedford cord pantaloons for mounted men, serge trousers for dismounted. All Highlanders retained kilts with khaki aprons all round, regimental hose and khaki spats.

Also of an advanced design—compared with European armies—was the British Infantry's personal equipment. The buff leather Slade-Wallace accoutrements, first introduced in 1888, proved unsatisfactory in the Boer War both as an ammunition carrier and due to weight, construction and lack of balance. Consequently some units adopted the leather 1882 bandolier issued to Cavalry or other types of bandolier made of webbing, usually worn in conjunction with parts of the Slade-Wallace equipment[42]. Such a makeshift arrangement could not last, and in 1903 a new brown leather equipment based on the bandolier principle was introduced. Though an improvement in several respects, its assembly was piecemeal and restricted the marching man's chest with three articles crossing thereon. Elements of it were adopted for mounted troops who remained so equipped in 1914.

The Infantry, however, went to war in the all-webbing equipment of revolutionary design approved in 1908[42]. It will be seen in the Plates, but its novel charrcteristics are worth summarising:

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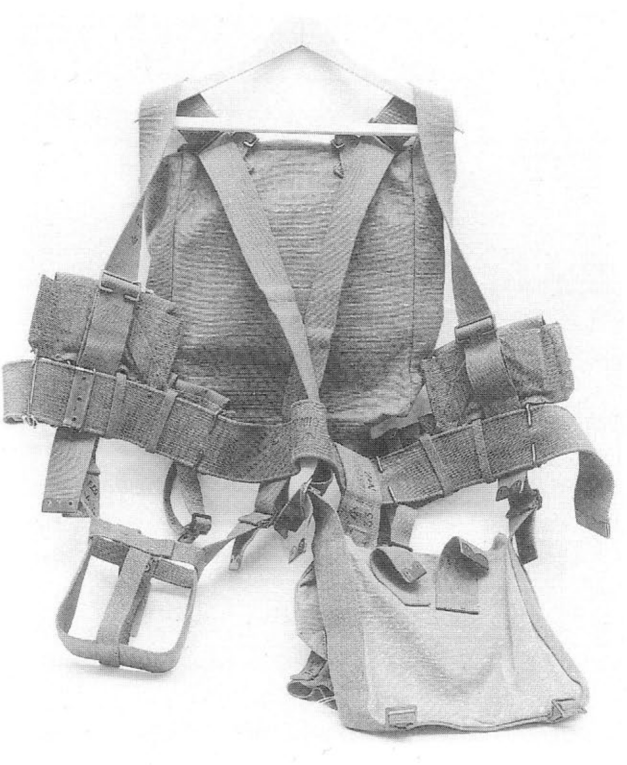
[41] See Men-at-Arms 201.

(a) The webbing material was more flexible and weather-proof then leather and all its fastenings were self-locking.

(b) The soldier could carry 150 rounds evenly balanced upon his person in the ten cartridge carriers.

(c) The component parts were all connected together so the equipment could be put on or taken off in one assembly, like a coat.

(d) The haversack, water-bottle and entrenching tool carrier could be attached at different positions to suit the wearer's circumstances.



Internal view of 1908 web equipment, showing from top: pack, cartridge carriers, waistbelt, water-bottle carrier (left), frog for bayonet and entrenching tool helve, haversack. Entrenching tool carrier missing. (NAM)

(e) The removal of the pack, containing the soldier's greatcoat and immediate necessities, or ammunition from the carriers, did not unbalance the assembly.

(f) No cross straps restricted the chest, and this, together with the assembly's balance, enabled the soldier to loosen or undo the waistbelt when on the march.

That the clothing and equipment used in 1914 remained in use for nearly a quarter of a century says much for their serviceability. The design of both certainly gave the BEF a markedly different appearance to its allies and its enemy. The Plates show its development, its overseas equivalent, and how its wearers were clothed on more formal occasions before they went to war.

A: Home Service Dress and Equipment, 1902–08 (1)
A1: Private, 14th Hussars, 1903
A2: Captain, 2nd Bn. The Buffs (East Kent Regiment), 1903
A3: Corporal, 2nd Bn. Highland Light Infantry, 1904

A1 and *A2* are from pictures of the 1903 Army Manoeuvres, *A3* from a regimental photograph. All three wear the 1902 SD. The branch of the Service was indicated by coloured markings on the detachable shoulder straps, soldiers also wearing embroidered regimental shoulder titles. From 1904 these shoulder straps were replaced for all ranks by plaited drab cord until changed for fixed straps in 1907 for soldiers, 1913 for officers. AO 10/1902 specified a system of vertical crows' feet braiding for showing officers' rank, but AO 261/1902 changed that for the slash-and-badge system on *A2*. Slouch hats, popularised during the Boer War, were worn on manoeuvres at home as late as 1905 by some regiments; *A2*'s has a white band denoting the 'enemy'. Though puttees were ordered for SD, the old leggings (*A3*) were to continue in use until stocks were reduced.

A1 is still accoutred as Boer War cavalry with the 1882 bandolier. *A3* has a webbing bandolier and waistbelt devised for South Africa and partially issued at home between 1902–04. *A2* and *A3* both have the 1895 Lee-Enfield, the former with the short arm-sling introduced for Mounted Infantry in South Africa. Besides *A2*'s Sam Browne belt, he carries a binocular case, haversack, and webbing sling and carrier for the greatcoat. He follows South African practice of carrying a soldier's weapon instead of sword and revolver.

In August 1914 the 14th Hussars and 2/Buffs were in India, but 2/HLI went to France with 5 Brigade of 2nd Division. 1/Buffs was in 6th Division.

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[42] See Men-at-Arms 108, *British Infantry Equipments 1908–1980*.

B: Home Service Dress and Equipment, 1902–08 (2)
B1: Sergeant, Army Ordnance Corps, 1905
B2: Lieutenant-Colonel on the Staff, 1908
B3: Private, 1st Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1906

Until at least 1912 general and staff officers continued to wear forage caps and blue serge undress, as in *B2*, rather than khaki SD, on manoeuvres. White cap covers were permitted in summer. *B2*'s staff function is denoted by his cap band and badge, gorget patches on the collar, and Staff pantaloons.

B1, in Drill Order, has the Brodrick cap, braided for his rank, which was authorised as the universal soldiers' undress headgear in 1902. It was also furnished with a khaki cover with peak as a substitute for the slouch hat in Marching Order. Note the jacket's distinguishing marks, pockets and rifle shoulder patches.

The Brodrick was replaced from 1904 by a peaked, coloured forage cap for wear with Full Dress on certain occasions (e.g. walking-out), and the cap in *B3* for SD.

B3 also has the 1903 Bandolier Equipment (see also *C3*); 50 rounds were carried in the bandolier and another 50 on the waistbelt in two 10-round and two 15-round pouches. To the latter were attached the webbing straps of the greatcoat carrier, which at the rear hooked up to the mess-tin cover. The haversack had a special outside pocket for the emergency ration. The water-bottle had its own leather carrier and strap. The rifle is the 1903 Mk I Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE), with 1903 $12\frac{1}{8}$in.-bladed bayonet.

In 1914 *B3*'s battalion was in 1 (Guards) Brigade, 1st Division.

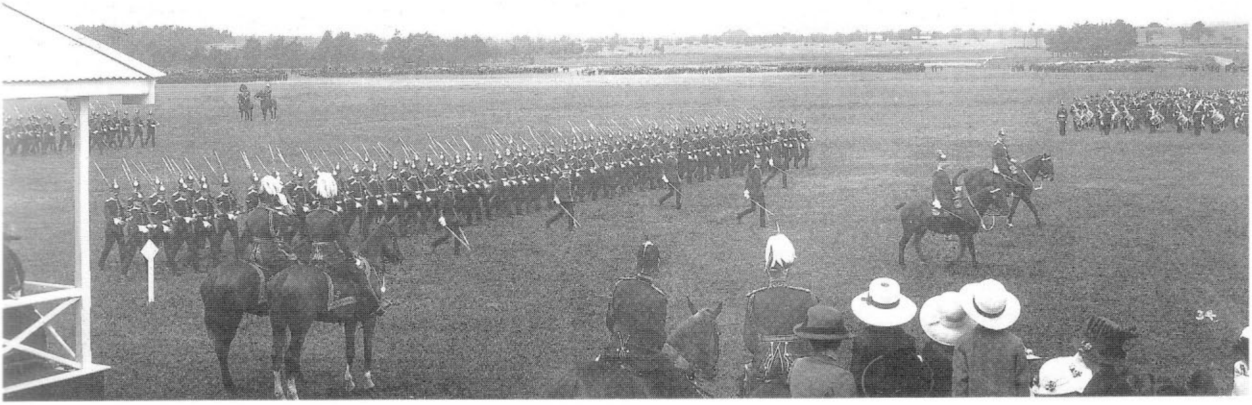
C: Foreign Service, 1902–13 (1)
C1: Private, 1st Bn. Hampshire Regiment, Mounted Infantry, 1903
C2: Captain, 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers, 1904
C3: Lance-Corporal, 2nd Bn. Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1910

All three figures, from photographs, illustrate colonial campaigning: *C1* in Somaliland against the 'Mad Mullah'; *C2* in the Tibet Expedition; *C3* on the North-West Frontier of India.

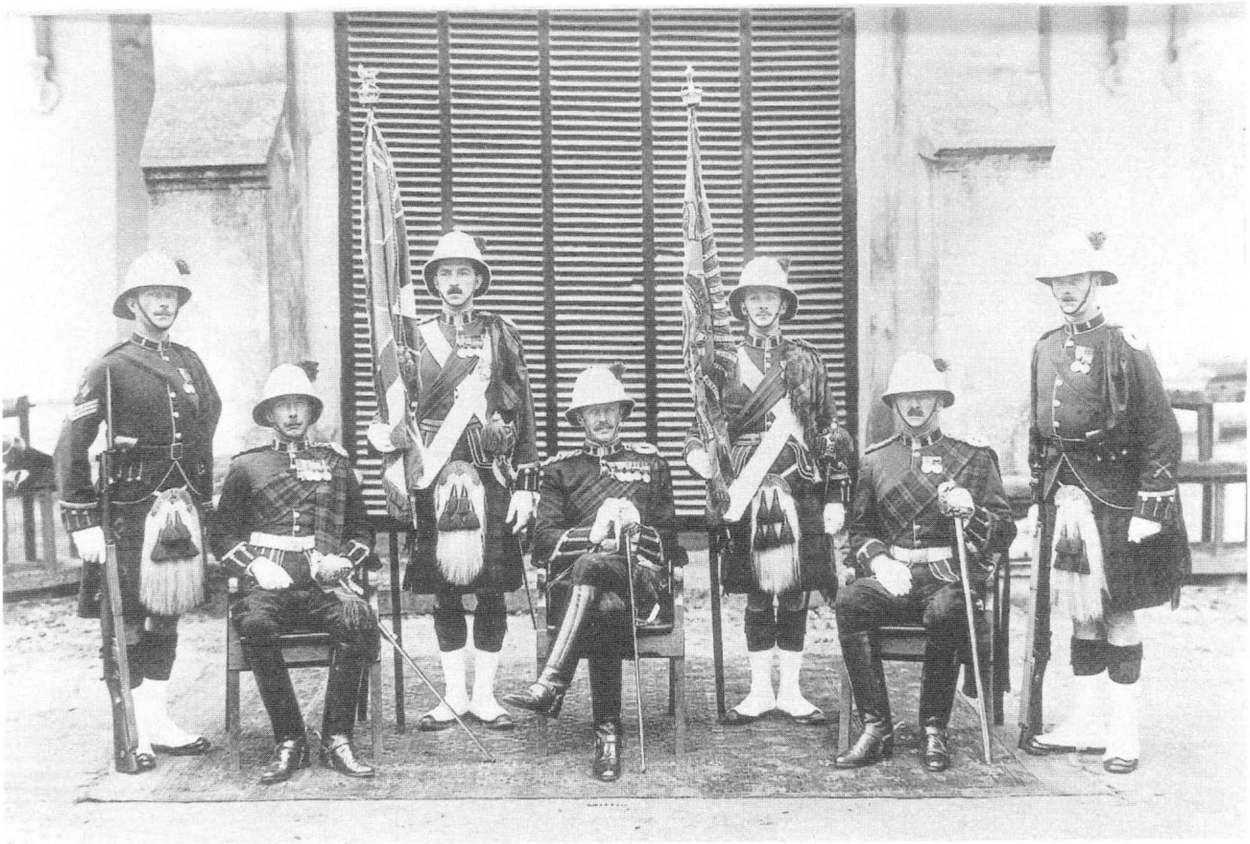
The old foreign service helmet (*C1*) was gradually phased out in favour of the Wolseley pattern (*C2*, *C3*) first adopted by officers in 1898 (see Men-at-Arms 201). *C2*'s soldiers in Tibet had the old pattern, but from 1905 Wolseleys were in general use abroad. As Mounted Infantry (an Arm not abolished until 1913) *C1* is accoutred similarly to *A1* but with waistbelt and bayonet; he wears the general issue 'greyback' shirt which remained in use for many years. *C2* and *C3* wear the KD equivalent of 1902 SD; shorts replaced trousers for Marching Order from 1905, hose-tops being worn with puttees from around 1908. Officers' rank badges in KD went on the shoulder straps.

C2 has Sam Browne belt with frog, without sword, revolver holster and pouch, and binocular case. All three have the Indian pattern water-bottle. Except for the latter, *C3* is armed and accoutred as *B3* but with the 1907 17in.-bladed bayonet.

C1's battalion went to France in 1914 with 11 Brigade, 4th Division, *C2*'s with 17 Brigade, 6th Division. *C3*'s was still in India but its 1st Bn. was with 10 Brigade, 4th Division.



Aldershot Royal Review, 22 June 1914. 1/Northamptonshire marching past King George V. Just 52 days later they reached France with 1st Division. (Author's collection)



Indian cold weather review order: 2/Black Watch field officers and Colour Party, Delhi Durbar, 1911. This battalion arrived in France with the Bareilly Brigade of the Meerut Division. (NAM)

D: Foreign Service, 1902–13 (2)
D1: Private, 7th Dragoon Guards, 1911
D2: Sergeant, 1st Bn. Manchester Regiment, 1913
D3: Lieutenant, 2nd Bn. Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), 1913

D1 and *D2*, from photographs, represent Review Order in the Indian hot and cold season respectively. Dismounted troops in *D1*'s dress wore white trousers. White Wolseley helmets were common to both seasons' ceremonial. *D2* has the scarlet serge frock worn in India instead of the cloth tunic. Although the 1903 equipment was now obsolete for Infantry, its waistbelt and one, sometimes two pouches were used for parades in India; its bandolier remained regulation for mounted troops. *D1* is armed with the 1908 sword, carried on the saddle when mounted.

D3, from a photograph in Malta, is in Drill Order: KD jacket with new step collar, worn with white shirt and black tie, changed to khaki in 1913, regimental trews of Douglas tartan, and Glengarry, the Scottish regiments' SD headgear. In No. 1 and No. 2 Dress he would have worn white and khaki Wolseley helmets, with black hackles, respectively. Note Sam Browne with double braces and Rifles' pattern sword.

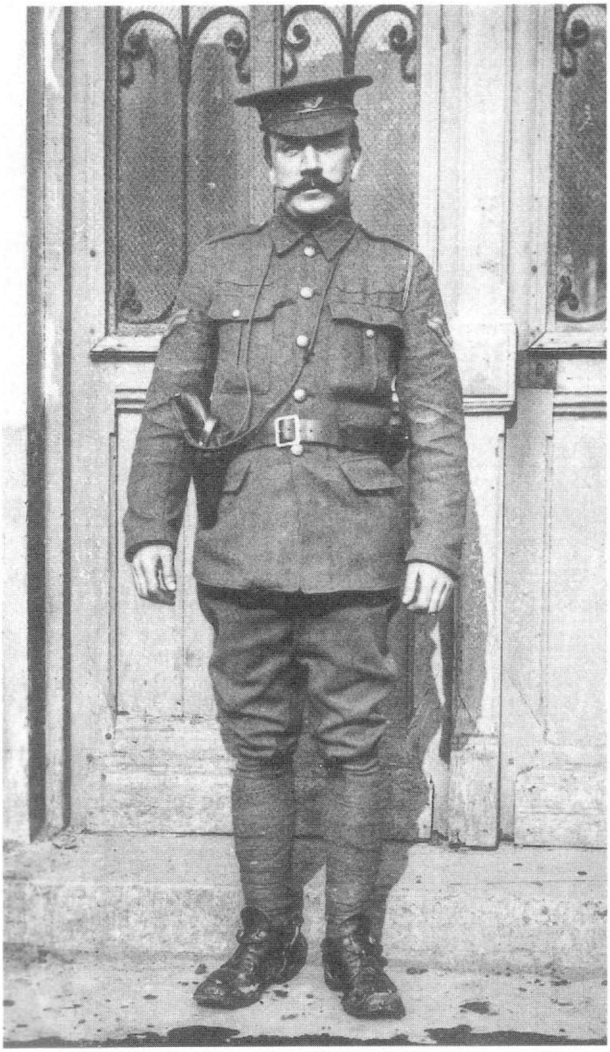
All three units arrived in France in November 1914, *D1* and *D2* with the Indian Corps (Secunderabad Cavalry and Jullundur Infantry Brigades respectively), *D3* with 23 Brigade, 8th Division.

E: Home Service Full Dress 1914 (1)
E1: Captain, 5th Dragoon Guards
E2: Corporal, 11th Hussars
E3: Private, 9th Lancers

In May and June of 1914 the British Army appeared for the last time wholly in Full Dress, at the annual grand ceremonial occasions like the Aldershot Royal Review and Searchlight Tattoo and the King's Birthday Parades held at all major military garrisons. *E1* and *E2* are two cavalry figures from such parades in mounted Review Order. *E3* is in dismounted Guard Order seen daily at the entrances of cavalry barracks, with overalls and Wellington boots instead of pantaloons and knee boots. Heavy Cavalry regiments (as *E1*) were chiefly distinguished by their helmet plumes, tunic facings, and the 6th Dragoon Guards' blue tunics; Hussars by their busby bags and plumes, *E2*'s pantaloons being peculiar to his regiment; and Lancers by their cap plumes and tunic facings, the 16th alone having scarlet tunics. The 9th's cap top and metal band round its waist was peculiar to the regiment. Cavalrymen's pouch-belts were now worn only by officers. Only Heavies wore the sword belt over the tunic, all carrying the sword on the saddle when mounted.

All three regiments went to France in August with the Cavalry Division, *E1* and *E2* with 1 Cavalry Brigade, *E3* with 2 Cavalry Brigade.

Mounted corporal of the Military Police. (IWM)



F: Home Service Full Dress 1914 (2)
F1: Lieutenant, Royal Field Artillery
F2: Sapper, Royal Engineers
F3: Driver, Army Service Corps

Here are representatives of the two supporting Arms and one of the Services in Review Order. All three featured in the BEF's divisions, RFA being replaced in the Cavalry Division by RHA, whose full dress is still worn today by the King's Troop.

Though Artillery and Engineers' helmets both bore the Royal Arms, the former (*F1*), like the ASC (*F3*), had a ball, RE a spike. RA and RE tunics were in reversed colours. All RFA were classed as mounted and uniformed accordingly. Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA), which manned the heavy batteries, were classed as dismounted (except for men actually mounted, like drivers). From 1904 RFA soldiers in full dress wore a girdle like *F3*'s but in red-blue-yellow; RGA a waistbelt as in *F2*.

All the Services in full dress wore helmets with a ball, except for Ordnance, Pay and Military Police with spikes, and blue tunics with different facings: cherry RAMC, scarlet AOC and MP, yellow APC, maroon AVC, and *F3*'s white.

The only branch without full dress was the Royal Flying Corps, who paraded in SD.

G: Home Service Full Dress 1914 (3)
G1: Captain, 1st Bn. Northamptonshire Regiment
G2: Private, 2nd Bn. Royal Scots
G3: Sergeant, 2nd Bn. King's Royal Rifle Corps

The largest element at the summer ceremonials, as in the BEF, was the Line Infantry in helmets (as in *G1* and *H3*) or fusilier caps, whose appearance was varied by the Scottish regiments (*G2* and *H1*) and the Rifles (*G3*). From 1902 the previous infantry tunic received pointed cuffs, a central white seam between two three-pointed white slashes with buttons on the back skirt, and, from 1913, shoulder straps in the facing colour. Officers' cuff and collar lace was simplified to a lieutenant's pattern, sashes were now worn round the waist, and a web sword waistbelt with buff slings worn under the tunic.

All Scottish regiments wore the doublet. The Kilmarnock bonnet in *G2* was also worn by the King's Own Scottish Borderers, a shako by the Highland Light Infantry and Cameronians, fusilier caps by the Royal Scots Fusiliers. *G2*'s trews are Hunting Stewart.

Officers of J Battery RHA, 5 Cavalry Brigade, at Ypres after nearly three months' fighting. (IWM)

All Rifles except Cameronians wore the busby, their rifle-green tunics distinguished by their facings: *G3*'s red, Cameronians (doublets) and Royal Irish Rifles green, Rifle Brigade black. Rifles marched past at the 'trail', others at the 'slope'. In Review Order only the waistbelt and frog were worn.

In the BEF *G1* and *G3* formed part of 2 Brigade, 1st Division, *G2* of 8 Brigade, 3rd Division.

H: Home Service Full Dress 1914 (4)
H1: Sergeant-Major, 2nd Bn. Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders
H2: Drummer, 1st Bn. Irish Guards
H3: Bugler, 2nd Bn. King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

Besides ceremonial and walking-out, full dress was also worn for Church Parades, the last being held on 2 August. *H1* shows the essentials of Highlanders' dress and differences from Lowland regiments (*G2*). The five kilted regiments were chiefly distinguished by their facings, sporrans, tartans and hose, all having white hackles except the Black Watch's red. The green ribbons on *H1*'s Government tartan kilt were peculiar to officers and senior NCOs.

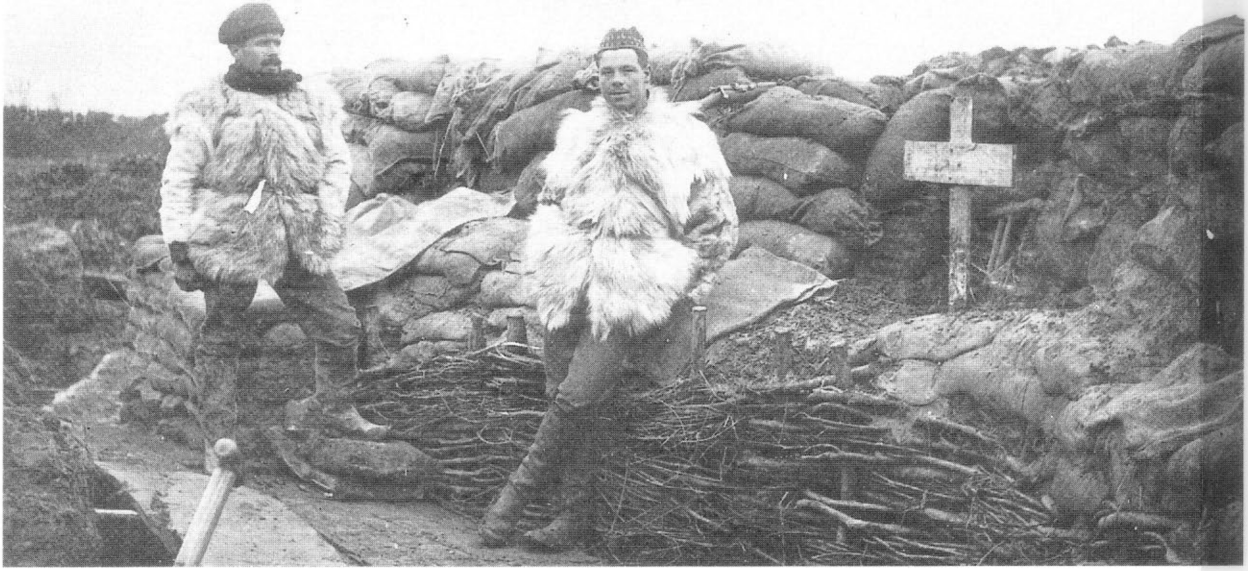
Guards' full dress differed only in minor details from that worn today. *H2*'s regiment, only formed in 1900, had as yet no battle honours to emblazon upon its drums. His *fleur-de-lys* pattern drummers' lace remains a Guards prerogative. Line drummers' and buglers' lace had red crowns and was more sparingly applied (*H3*). Their helmet chin-chains were hooked up. Line bandsmen had plain white lace, Guards' musicians gold. Note differences between *H3*'s helmet and the officer's in *G1*. Light Infantry were distinguished from other Line by dark green helmets.

These battalions went to war respectively with 19 Independent Brigade; 4 (Guards) Brigade, 2nd Division and 13 Brigade, 5th Division.

I: British Expeditionary Force, 1914 (1)
I1: Brigadier-General, General Staff
I2: Lance-Corporal, 15th Hussars

I1 represents the senior staff officer at a Corps headquarters as denoted by his armband. Divisional and brigade HQs had plain red and blue respectively. It also illustrates Staff service uniform changes since *B2*. The blue forage cap was still worn but with khaki cover. The jacket has the 1913 collar with general officer's gorget patches.

I2 shows a cavalryman and his horse equipped for war with 90-round 1903 bandolier, 1908 sword in its frog on the saddle's near side, SMLE rifle in its bucket on the off. His water-bottle has the 1903



2/Royal Scots Fusiliers, 7th Division, in trenches wearing winter kit, late 1914. Compare this trench with that on the Aisne in September, in the photograph on page 26. (IWM)

carrier but his haversack is of webbing. On the horse is his groundsheet, greatcoat, blanket, picquetting peg, canvas water bucket and corn sack. The circular cavalry mess-tin was strapped to the rifle bucket.

The 15th Hussars' three squadrons provided the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisional cavalry.

J: British Expeditionary Force, 1914 (2)
J1: Lieutenant, 2nd Bn. Grenadier Guards
J2: Sergeant, 1st Bn. Black Watch
J3: Private, 4th Bn. Middlesex Regiment

This and *K1*, *K3* show infantry service dress and equipment at the outbreak of war. Unlike Line officers (*K1*), Guards' wore their rank badges on their shoulder straps. This subaltern (*J1*) suspends his revolver and pouch, sword and haversack from his Sam Browne, with his binocular and compass cases slung from separate straps.

Soldiers' fixed shoulder straps (*J2*, *J3*) now had metal regimental titles (compare with *A3*, *B3*). Highland jacket skirts were cut away in front. The kilt's tartan was completely concealed by the apron.

J2 and *J3* show the 1908 web equipment, with adjustable waistbelt, frog, braces, two cartridge carriers each with five 15-round pockets, pack, haversack, water-bottle, entrenching tool carriers for head (under water-bottle) and helve (attached to bayonet scabbard).

These three battalions belonged respectively to 4 (Guards) Brigade, 2nd Division, 1 (Guards) Brigade, 1st Division, and 8 Brigade, 3rd Division.

K: British Expeditionary Force, 1914 (3)
K1: Major, 2nd Bn. Royal Munster Fusiliers
K2: Gunner, Royal Horse Artillery
K3: Corporal, 1st Bn. Royal Scots Fusiliers

Also in 1 (Guards) Brigade, which had two Line battalions, *K1* represents Maj. P. A. Charrier who was killed at Etreux in command of his battalion's rearguard action for I Corps. He had the eccentric habit of wearing a Wolseley helmet with Munster distinctions instead of his SD cap. His Stohwasser leggings, correct for infantry mounted officers in the 1911 Dress Regulations, had been officially superseded in 1913 by laced leggings, but many officers still wore the former. His medal ribbons are Ashanti 1900, Queen's South Africa, and Africa General Service (Somaliland).

RHA gunners (*K2*) were accoutred as cavalrymen but with 50-round bandoliers and with haversacks and water-bottles over opposite shoulders. Mounted men tied their puttees round the ankle, dismounted round the top fold.

Apart from the Glengarry, Lowland Scottish (*K3*) were uniformed as other infantry. As a machine-gunner he has removed his pack to his GS limbered wagon; his entrenching tool carrier is in the alternative position between haversack and water-bottle. His battalion was in 9 Brigade, 3rd Division.

L: British Expeditionary Force, 1914 (4)
L1: Private, Royal Army Medical Corps
L2: Private, 14th Bn. London Regiment (London Scottish) (TF)
L3: A survivor, winter 1914

Based on photographs of Field Ambulance men on the Aisne and at Ypres, this (*L1*) stretcher-bearer's accoutrements derive from the 1903 equipment. The RAMC arm badge was worn on both sleeves but the armband only on the left. RAMC men were unarmed.

The London Scottish was the first into action of several TF units that reinforced the BEF during First Ypres and its aftermath. *L2* is based on a photograph of its survivors after its attack at Messines on 31 October which sustained 43 per cent casualties. They were armed and equipped as Regulars but without aprons for their hodden grey kilts. The greatcoat is the first khaki pattern authorised in 1904 for dismounted men. Note the expendable 50-round cotton bandolier.

After First Ypres, with operations confined to trench warfare, there were few old Regulars of the original BEF left. *L3* represents one of them, having exchanged his cap for a woollen 'comforter' and clad in one of the goatskin coats sent out as protection against the winter cold and wet in the Flanders trenches. Based on photographs of 1/York & Lancaster and 3/Rifle Brigade, 6th Division.

Recommended further reading

Ascoli, David, *The Mons Star: The BEF 1914* (1981)
Caffrey, Kate, *Farewell Leicester Square* (1980)
Carew, Tim, *The Vanished Army* (1964)
Craster, J. M., *Fifteen Rounds Per Minute: Grenadiers at War 1914* (1976)
Edmonds, Brig.-Gen. Sir James, *Military Operations, France and Belgium: Vol I. 1914 (Aug–Oct)* (1922); *Vol II. 1914 (Oct–Nov)* (1925)—*(The Official History)*.
Hamilton, Lord Ernest, *The First Seven Divisions* (1916)
Macdonald, Lyn, *1914* (1987)
Needham, Capt. E. J., *The First Three Months* (1936)
Owen, Edward, *1914; Glory Departing* (1986)
Simpson, Keith, *The Old Contemptibles* (1981)
Terraine, John, *Mons: Retreat to Victory* (1960)

1914 Full Dress only:
MacLeod, Lt.-Col. Olaf, *Their Glory Shall Not Be Blotted Out* (1986)

Notes sur les planches en couleur

A1 Tenue de service de 1902; l'arme du service est indiquée par le liseré coloré sur les pattes d'épaule; notez aussi l'insigne brodé du régiment à l'épaule—caractéristiques qui disparaissent à partir de 1904. Introduction du fusil avec courte bandoulière pour l'infanterie montée en Afrique du Sud, l'équipement personnel est identique à celui porté pendant la guerre des Boers. **A2** Les grands chapeaux mous conservent leur popularité en manoeuvres jusqu'en 1905; un bandeau blanc indique l''ennemi'. Insignes de grade sur manchettes introduits en 1902. Il porte un fusil ainsi que son équipement d'officier. **A3** Notez l'insigne du régiment sur le calot écossais, le glengarry; insigne brodé de l'unité sur l'épaule; anciennes guêtres, qui sont officiellement remplacées en 1902 par des bandes molletières mais que l'on voit souvent après cette date.

B1 Uniforme d'exercice avec casquette Brodrick, la coiffure des soldats pour la petite tenue à partir de 1902. Celle-ci a une couverture kaki détachable et une visière pour la marche. A compter de 1904, elle est remplacée par le képi de couleur à visière pour la tenue de sortie, et par celui que l'on voit sur B3 pour la tenue de service. **B2** Des képis, avec leur manchon blanc pour l'été et un uniforme de petite tenue, bleu, que les officiers d'état-major portent pendant les manoeuvres jusque'en 1912 environ. Le bandeau de képi, les pièces sur le hausse-col et les pantalons dénotent sa fonction d'état-major. **B3** Equipement avec bandoulière à cartouches de 1903; sangles en webbing (grosse toile) du porte-capote reliées aux sacs à munitions sur le ceinturon et au couvercle de gamelle au dos.

C1 Chemise dite 'Greyback' (de flanelle grise), en service pendant de nombreuses années; ancien casque du service à l'étranger remplacé par le modèle 'Wolseley' (C2, C3) à partir de 1905; accoutrements comme sur A1 mais avec ceinturon et baïonnette. **C2** Les officiers adoptent le casque Wolseley vers 1898; tenue légère d'exercice, kaki, dite la 'khaki drill' qui est l'équivalent de la tenue de service de 1902; les insignes de grade se portent sur les pattes d'épaules sur cet uniforme. **C3** Les shorts remplacent les pantalons pour l'uniforme de marche à partir de 1905, les chaussettes 'hose-top' se portant avec des bandes molletières à partir de 1908 environ. Ces trois personnages portent le modèle spécial de bidon pour l'Inde.

D1 La 'Review Order' de saison chaude; la troupe quand elle n'est pas montée porte cet uniforme avec des pantalons blancs. Ceinturon et sacs à munitions de

Farbtafeln

A1 Dienstuniform aus dem Jahre 1902. Die farbige Paspel an den Schulterstreifen lässt den Dienstbereich erkenne. Darüber hinaus ist das besticke Regimentsabzeichen an der Schulter erwähnenswert, das seit 1904 nicht mehr verwendet wurde. In Südafrika wurde bei der berittenen Infanterie ein Gewehr mit kurzer Schlaufe und die gleiche Ausrüstung wie im Burenkrieg eingeführt. **A2** Bis zum Jahr 1905 wurde der Schlapphut bei Manövern getragen; der feind trug ein weisses Band. Die Ranginsignien an der Manschette wurden 1902 eingeführt. Ein Offizier, der zusätzlich mit einem Gewehr ausgerüstet ist. **A3** Das Regimentsabzeichen befindet sich an der schottischen Glengarry-Mütze. Das bestickte Einheitsabzeichen befindet sich an der Schulter. Im Jahre 1902 wurden die hohen Gamaschen—die man dennoch weiterhin häufig benutzte—durch Wickelgamaschen offiziell ersetzt.

B1 Drillichuniform mit der Broderick Kappe bildet seit 1902 ein Bestandteil der Interimsuniform für Soldaten. Die Kappe hatte einen abnehmbaren Khakistoffüberzug, und für das Marschieren einen Mützenschirm. Im Jahre 1904 wurde die Feldmütze mit farbigem Mützenschirm und die Ausgehuniform eingeführt; die Dienstuniform besass die gleiche Kappe, die in B3 abgebildet ist. **B2** Feldmütze mit weissen Stoffüberzug für den Sommer. Bis ca. £912 wurde die blaue Interimsuniform bei Manövern von Stabsoffizieren getragen. Ein Band an der Kappe, ein kragenspiegel und Pantalons deuten auf die Stabsfunktion hin. **B3** Patronengurte aus dem Jahre 1903. Ein Gurt für den Mantel ist am Hüftgürtel dr Patronentaschen vorn und am Essgeschirrbehältnis hinten angebracht.

C1 Ein 'Greyback'-Hemd, das über einen langen Zeitraum hinweg zur Garderobe gehörte. Ab 1905 wurde der alte Auslandsdiensthelm durch das Wolseley-Muster (C2, C3) ersetzt. Die Ausstaffierung ist der von A1 gleich, ausser dass ein Hüftgürtel und ein Bajonett hinzukam. **C2** Um 1898 übernahmen die Offiziere den Wolseley Helm, die leichte 'Khaki Drill' (Drillichuniform) wurde 1902 die Dienstuniform, und Rangabzeichen wurden an den Schulterstreifen angebracht. **C3** Ab 1905 wurden Shorts anstelle von Hosen Bestandteil der Marschuniform. Die 'Hose-Top'-Strümpfe wurden ab 1908 mit Wickelgamaschen getragen. Die drei Abbildungen besitzen Wasserflaschen, die nur in Indien zu sehen waren.

D1 'Review Order' für heisse Jahreszeiten. Abgesessene Soldaten trugen diese

l'équipement obsolète de 1903, conservés pour les parades en Inde; épée de 1908 fixée à la selle quand le soldat est monté. **D2** La 'Review Order' de saison froide, avec 'frock' en serge écarlate. **D3** 'Drill Order': veste légère, kaki, avec nouveau col ouvert (la chemise et la cravate, noire/blanche, sont changées en kaki, 1913), pantalons régimentaires en tartan 'Douglas' et calot 'Glengarry'.

E1, E2 'Review Order' des soldats montés, datant de la dernière année où toute l'armée apparait en grande tenue. **E3** 'Guard Order' des soldats quand ils ne montent pas à cheval, avec des pantalons et des bottes différents. Seuls les officiers portent maintenant des sacs à munitions.

F Ces trois personnages sont en 'Review Order'. L'artillerie et les ingénieurs portent des vestes aux couleurs inversées; le casque des ingénieurs est à pointe, tandis que celui des autres services d'appui est à boule. L'artillerie de combat est classée et porte l'uniforme, comme les troupes montées.

G La tunique de l'infanterie reçoit des manchettes à pointe et des pattes d'épaule dans les couleurs régimentaires, en 1902 et 1913 respectivement. L'infanterie de ligne porte des casques (**G1**), ou des 'fusilier caps', les unités écossaises et les Fusiliers (**G2, G3**) ont une coiffure spéciale. Notez la coupe 'doublet' de la veste de G2, commune à tous les régiments écossais; et le bonnet 'Kilmarnock' porté par les 'Royal Scots' et les 'King's Own Scottish Borderers'. Les pantalons sont en tartan régimentaire—'Hunting Stewart'. Les Régiments des 'Rifles' portent le 'busby', et des tuniques vert foncé avec couleurs régimentaires pour les parements; ils marchent lors des parades dans cette position, dite 'trail arms'.

H1 Notez les caractéristiques essentielles des régiments 'Highland', contrastant avec l'uniforme 'Lowland' (G2). Des rubans verts sur le kilt sont portés seulement par les officiers et les sous-officiers de grade supérieur. Les régiments se distinguent par les couleurs des parements, les modèles de 'sporran' (petite sacoche traditionnelle), le tartan et les hautes chassettes. **H2** Cet uniforme ressemble fort à la grande tenue que portent les Régiments des Gardes aujourd'hui; le dessin de la dentelle fleur de lis est particulier aux tambours des Gardes. **H3** Les tambours et sonneurs de clairon des régiments de ligne portent cette dentelle avec un dessin de couronnes rouges. L'infanterie légère porte des casques verts.

I1 Les képis bleus ont maintenant des couvre-képi kaki. Notez le col de la tunique de 1913, ici avec insignes de général sur le hausse-col. Le brassard dénote un état-major de Corps; les états-majors de division et de brigade portent des brassards rouges et bleus. **I2** Un cavalier et son cheval, équipé pour la guerre; 1903, bandoulière de 90 cartouches, épée de 1908 sur le flanc le plus proche de la selle, fusil SMLE dans un étui sur l'autre côte, bidon à eau de 1903; sur le cheval, bâche de campement, manteau, couverture, piquet d'attache, seau à eau et sac de maïs; la gamelle circulaire de la cavalerie est attachée à la sangle de l'étui de fusil.

J1 Les officiers des Gardes portent des insignes de grade sur les pattes d'épaule. Révolver, poche à munitions, épée, musette, sont fixés au ceinturon Sam Browne, tandis que jumelles et étui à boussole se portent séparément en bandoulière. **J2** Notez les insignes régimentaires métalliques sur les pattes d'épaule. La veste des Highlanders à des basques coupées sur le devant. Le kilt en tartan a un couvre-kilt de toile kaki. **J3** Comme J2, il porte l'équipement de 1908, le webbing: ceinturon, porte-baïonnette avec manche d'outil de tranchée fixé, la tête de l'outil de tranchée est dans un porte-outil sous le bidon à eau, deux cartouchières de cinq poches (15 cartouches par poche), des bretelles de suspension, un sac, une musette.

K1 Le Major Charrier, tué à Etreux à la tête d'une dernière résistance héroïque, avait l'habitude eccentrique de porter un casque Wolseley avec distinctions régimentaires au lieu du képi normal. Notez les anciennes guêtres Stohwasser, remplacées officiellement par des guêtres lacées en 1913. **K2** Artilleurs de l'artillerie à cheval portent l'équipement de la cavalerie mais avec des bandoulières de 50 cartouches, et les musettes et les bidons à eau sur l'épaule opposée. **K3** Hormis le 'Glengarry', les Lowlanders portent le même uniforme que les autres unités de l'infanterie de ligne. C'est un mitrailleur, son grand sac est porté sur une voiture.

L1 L'insigne du Royal Army Medical Corps se porte sur les deux manches, le brassard sur la gauche uniquement. Les hommes du RAMC ne sont pas armées. **L2** La première des unités de la Territorial Force à avoir vu l'action, ce régiment ne porte pas de couvre-kilt sur leurs kilts 'hodden-grey'. La capote est le modèle de 1904.; notez la bandoulière supplémentaire, en coton, de 50 cartouches. **L3** L'un des très rares survivants—puisque l'on a calculé que sur chaque bataillon de 1000 hommes de la BEF en août 1914, seule une moyenne de 30 hommes se trouvaient toujours avec leurs unités en novembre. Il a échangé son calot pour un 'cap comforter' (ou bonnet de laine) et il a acquis une veste en peau de chèvre.

Uniform mit weissen Hosen. Ein veralteter Ausrüstungshüftgürtel und Patronentaschen aus dem Jahre 1903, die für Paraden in Indien weiterhin

D1 'Review Order' für heisse Jahreszeiten. Abgesessene Soldaten trugen diese Uniform mit weissen Hosen. Ein veralteter Ausrüstungshüftgürtel und Patronentaschen aus dem Jahre 1903, die für Paraden in Indien weiterhin Anwendung fanden. Im Jahre 1908 wurde das Schwert am Sattel befestigt. **D2** 'Review Order' für kalte Jahreszeiten mit scharlachrotem Serge (Innenfutter) im 'Frock' (Gehrock). **D3** 'Drill Order' setzte sich aus einer leichten Khaki-Jacke mit einem neugestalteten offenen Kragen (Hemd und Krawatten wurden 1913 von schwarz/weiss auf khaki verändert), Regimentshosen im Douglas Tartan und der Glengarry-Mütze zusammen.

E1, E2 Berittener 'Review Order' aus dem letzten Jahr, indem die gesamte Armee in der vollständigen Dienstbekleidung erschien. **E3** Abgesessener 'Guard Order' mit anderen Hosen und Stiefeln. Nur die Offiziere hatten nunmehr eine Patronentasche.

F Die drei Abbildungen zeigen den 'Review Order'. Artillerie und Pioniere trugen Uniformröcke mit umgekehrtem Farbmuster. Die Pionierhelm war mit einem Spitzaufsatz, im Gegensatz zum Kugelaufsatz der anderen Nachschubtruppen, versehen. Die Feldartillerie wurde die berittene Einheiten uniformiert und klassifiziert.

G Der Uniformrock der Infanterie wurde mit spitzzulaufenden Manschetten versehen und erhielt Schulterstreifen, die man ab 1902 und 1913 entsprechend in den Regimentsfarben hielt. Die Frontinfanterie trug Helme (**G1**) oder 'Fusilier Caps' (Füsilier-Mützen). Die schottischen Einheiten und die Rifles (Schützen) (**G2, G3**) hatten eine besondere Kopfbedeckung. Ausserdem ist zu beachten, dass der Uniformrock in der Abbildung G2 wie ein Wams geschnitten ist und von sämtlichen schottischen Regimentern getragen wurde. Die Royal Scots und die King's Own Scottish Borderers trugen die Kilmarnock-Schottenmütze. Die Hosen wurden aus dem Regimentstartan, Hunting Stewart, hergestellt. Die Rifle-Regimenter trugen Busby- und dunkelgrüne Uniformröcke mit Regimentsaufschlägen in den entsprechenden Farben. Während einer Parade marschierten sie in dieser Haltung 'Trail Arms' (Gewehr rechts).

H1 Die Uniformen der Highland Regimenter unterscheiden sich durch auffallende Merkmale zu den Lowland Uniformen (G2). Nur Offiziere und Unteroffiziere trugen grüne Bänder am Schottenrock. Die Regimenter unterschieden sich durch die Farbe des Aufschlags, den speziellen Sporran (beschlagene Felltasche der Schottentracht), den Tartan und die Strümpfe. **H2** Die heutige Uniform der Guards Regimenter unterscheidet sich nicht sehr; das fleur-de-lys (Schwertlilien) Spitzenmuster ist ein besonderes Merkmal der Guards Trommler. **H3** Die Trommler des Frontregiments und die Hornisten trugen diese Spitzenmuster mit roten Kronen. Die leichte Infanterie hatte grüne Helme.

I1 Die blauen Feldmützen erhielten nun einen Überzug aus Khakistoff. Dem Kragen dieses Uniformrocks aus dem Jahre 1913 sollte besondere Beachtung geschenkt werden, der mit dem Kragenspiegel einer Generalsuniform abgebildet ist. Die Armbinde deutet darauf hin, dass es sich um ein Mitglied des Corps handelt. Die Angehörigen der Divisionen und Brigade trugen einfache rote und blaue Armbänder. **I2** Ein Kavallerist mit seinem Pferd, gewappnet für den Krieg. Ein Patronengurt mit 90 Schuss aus dem Jahre 1903. Das Schwert aus dem Jahre 1908 ist neben ihm am Sattel befestigt und das SMLE Gewehr trug man auf der anderen Seite. Die Wasserflasche stammt aus dem Jahr 1903. Die Ausrüstung, die vom Pferd mitgeführt wird, setzt sich aus einer Regenplane, Mantel, Decke, Pflock, Wassereimer und einem Getreidesack zusammen. Das runde Essgeschirr der Kavalleristen wurde am Gewehrhalfter festgebunden.

J1 Die Guards Offiziere trugen Rangabzeichen an den Schulterstreifen. Am Sam browne Gürtel wurde der Revolver, die Patronentasche, das Schwert und der Proviant befestigt. Der Feldstecher und das Kompasshgehäuse wurden separat umgehangen. **J2** Besondere Beachtung gebührt den metallenen Regimentsabzeichen auf den Schulterstreifen. Der Uniformrock der Highland hatte vorn einen Ausschnitt. Über dem Tartan-Schottenrock trug man einen Khaki-Schurz. **J3** Wie in der Abbildung J2 trägt er die Gurtausrüstung aus dem Jahre 1908: Hüftgürtel, Bajonettschlaufe versehen mit Handgriff und Spitze in einem Behältnis unter der Wasserflasche, zwei Patronentaschen mit je fünf Taschen (15 Patronen pro Taschen), Schulterriemen, Rucksack und Proviant.

K1 Major Charrier, der in Etreux (Frankreich) ums Leben kam, wo er die letzte Stellung heldenhaft verteidigte, hatte die aussergewöhnliche Angewohnheit einen Wolseley Helm mit Regimentsabzeichen anstelle der normalen Mütze zu tragen. Die alten Stohwasser Gamaschen wurden 1913 offiziell durch geschnürte Gamaschen abgelöst. **K2** Die beritten Artillerieschützen waren mit der Kavallerieausrüstung ausgestattet, trugen einen Patronengurt mit 50 Schuss, den Proviant und die Wasserflasche auf der anderen Schulterseite. **K3** Ausser der Glengarry-Mütze erhielten die Lowland Scots die gleichen Uniform wie die restlichen Infanterieverbände an der front. Da es sich um einen Maschinengewehrschützen handelt, wird seine Ausrüstung auf einem Wagen transportiert.

L1 Das Abzeichen des Royal Army Medical Corps wurde auf beiden Ärmeln angebracht, die Armbinde jedoch nur links. Die RAMC-Männer waren unbewaffnet. **L2** Die ersten Verbände der Territorial Force, die in Kampfhandlungen verwickelt wurden. Dieses Regiment trug keine Schurze über ihren 'hodden-grey' (grauer, grober ungefärbter Wollstoff) Schottenröcke. Der Mantel entspricht dem Mustern aus dem Jahr 1904. Auffallend ist der zusäzliche Leinenpatronengurt mit 50 Schuss. **L3** Einer der wenigen Überlebenden. Gemäss Berechnungen verblieben in jedem BEF-Bataillon, das im August 1914 noch 1.000 Mann zählte, durchschnittlich nur 30 Mann im November. Er hat seine Mütze mit einem aus Wolle gestrickten 'Cap Comforter' vertauscht und trägt eine Ziegenlederjacke.

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Michael Barthorp was educated at Wellington College and was commissioned into The Rifle Brigade in 1946. Demobilised in 1948, he served as a Territorial with The Royal Hampshire Regiment before rejoining the Reg
The Northamptonshire Regiment t
family tradition. Graduating from College in 1960, he served at the Ministry of Defence and with The Royal Anglian Regiment before retiring in 1968. He has since published eleven books and many articles on British Army
contributed nine
rms series. He lives in

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